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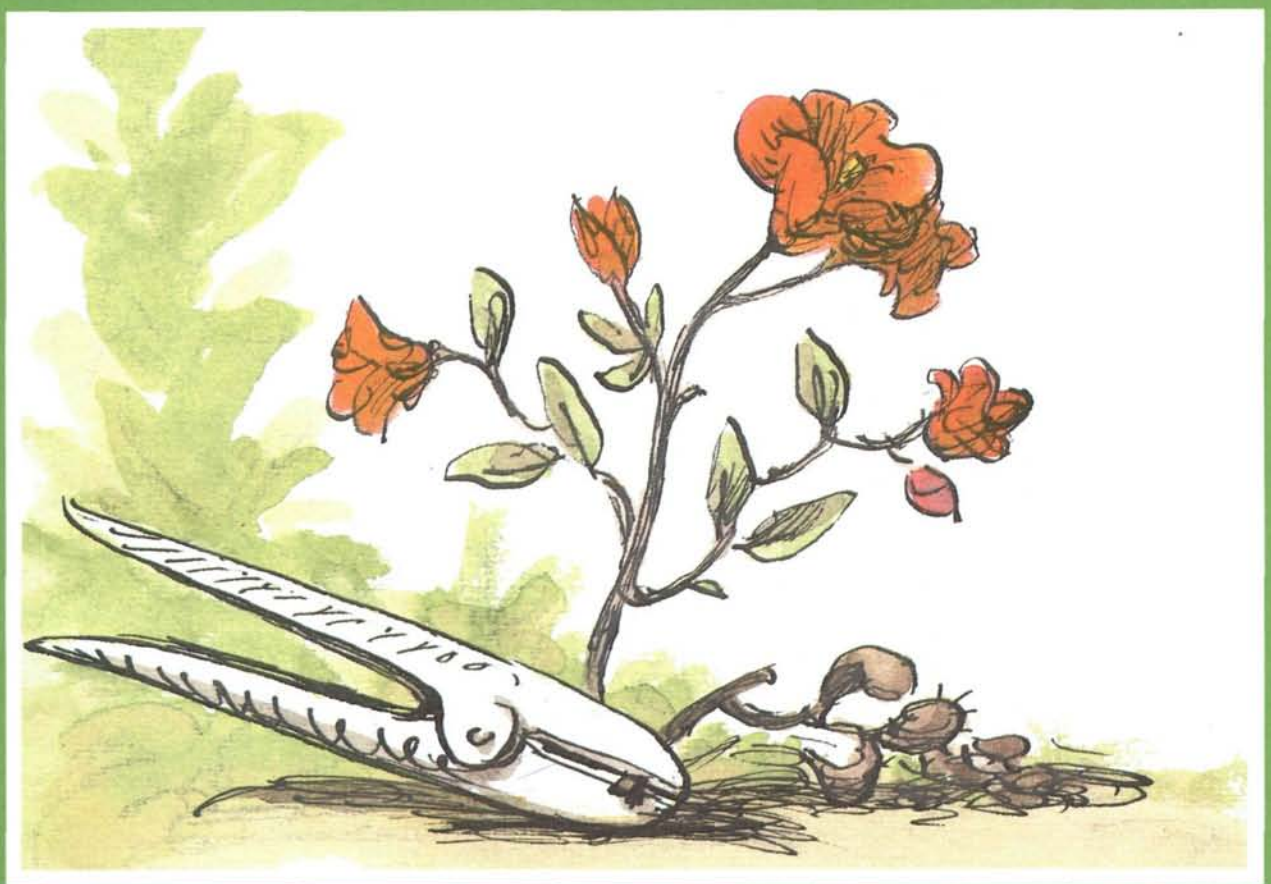
CHRONICLES OF CULTURE

LETTERS & ARTS MORALS & MANNERS



Berman
Christensen
Hawkins
Pradl
Wilson

On Conservative Modernists

VOLUME 8 · NUMBER 5 · MAY 1984

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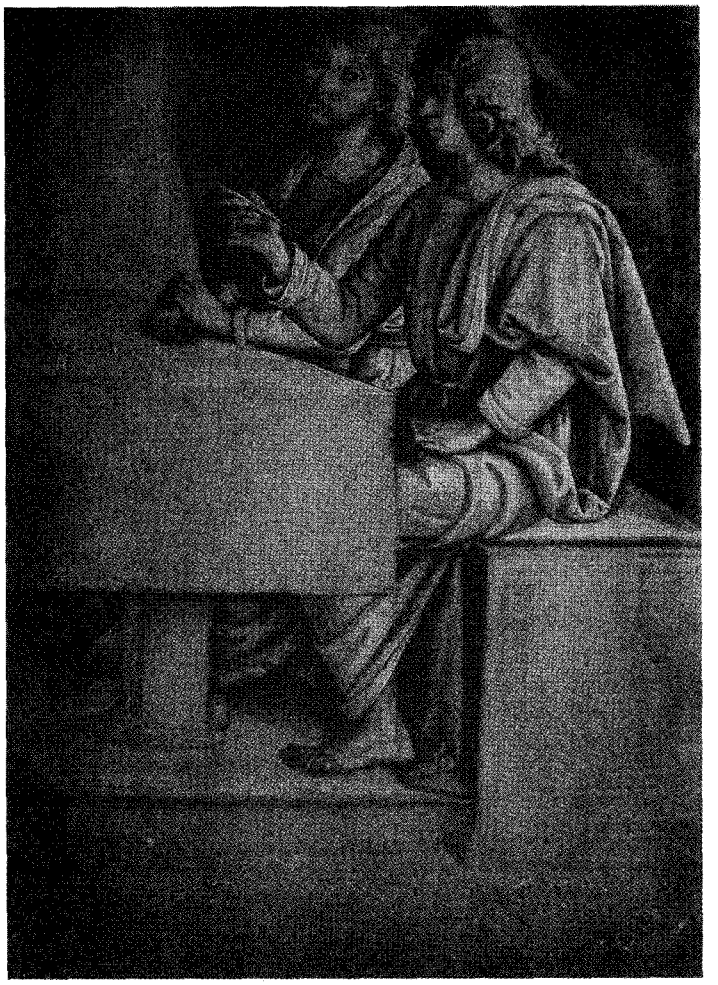

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COMMENT

Jorge Luis Borges was born in 1899, a month before Ernest Hemingway and in the same generation as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson, George Orwell, and William Faulkner. Throughout their lives the writers of this generation had to refuse the work assigned to them by those who evidently knew better: that is, writing with "social responsibility." In practice, that meant taking the approved view of imperialism, the class struggle, and other manifestations of the decline of the West. Wilson began his career by doing so, changed, and ended up as our best man of letters. Hemingway began as a great novelist but also changed, and ended by praising good causes in bad fiction. Today a great deal of literature is a branch of politics, and is intent on celebrating the value of liberalism. It is above all moral, and it usually identifies evil with democratic society and good with the catharsis or cleansing rage of revolution.

There has, in other words, been a kind of regression to the literary values we had before Modernism. Literature is supposed to celebrate an idea and improve the reader. Nowadays, the good poet turns out to be not Eliot but MacLeish, the good novelist is not Cozzens but Mailer.

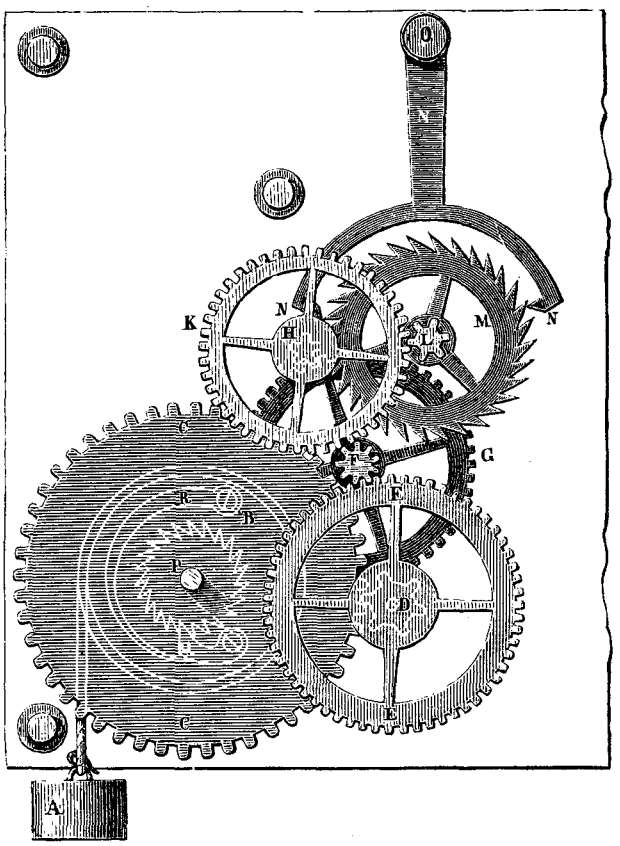
But at the heart of Modernism has been a certain obstinacy about believing things. Fitzgerald said that he believed in the politics of the left, but he would not write about them. They were, evidently, too moral for literature and without the ambiguity of life. The moderns wrote in the symbolic mode, but with a realist temper. They had little use for that curious combination of beliefs in original human innocence and social guilt. They shared what is sometimes called "the tragic view of life." They distrusted utopias, and one of them probably made it impossible for utopian politics to be taken seriously for a very long time.

One of the most interesting things about 20th-century literature is that our best writers are not prescriptive; only the mediocre ones are full of passionate intensity. The great writers seem to have been skeptical, and to have resisted ideas. The bad ones have been violated by ideas. And their readers in the cultural bureaucracies, the media, teaching, and government, have been deeply troubled by such heterodoxy. It is enough to dislike mankind to be in their bad graces, so that even literature hundreds of years old comes to be judged for its sweetness, toleration, and light. Jonathan Swift, who was worshiped by his many friends, is now viewed as a kind of part-time psychotic while the inimitable Mailer is generally perceived to suffer only from moral generosity too hastily applied to literary form.

One of the greatest rewards of reading Orwell and Eliot and Borges is that we will not be troubled by virtue. In what must have been a memorable interview a few years ago Borges stated—as he had stated before—that he did not have his own form of orthodoxy with which to confront the expectations of the intelligentsia. All he had was the traditional objectivity of the artist. Below is his summation of the making of a conservative:

> Once, I was engaged in conversation with a writer and she suddenly said to me: 'You, as a Conservative, say this,' And I told her: 'No, I'm not a Conservative: I'm a Radical.' And she said: 'No, no. You are essentially a Conservative.' And I realized she was right. This was one of the reasons that led me to join the Conservative Party. Besides, I realized that whenever I spoke with Conservative friends of mine, I agreed with them on everything. So I joined the Conservative Party a few days before the elections. Hardoy tried to advise me against it; he told me it was absurd, they didn't have the slightest chance of winning, and I made this remark. I told him: 'A gentleman is interested in lost causes only.' And he said to me: 'Oh, well! In that case I won't say another word.'

It is a charming and illustrative story. The case is not that the conservative temper in writing opposes to liberal ideas their equal and opposite counterpart: none of the great writers has the remotest intention of defending capitalism against socialism. They assert instead intellectual independence, and one of the great ironies of our time is that conservatism, which is more or less blindly unconscious of the literary and artistic culture which helps sustain it, has been accompanied in its



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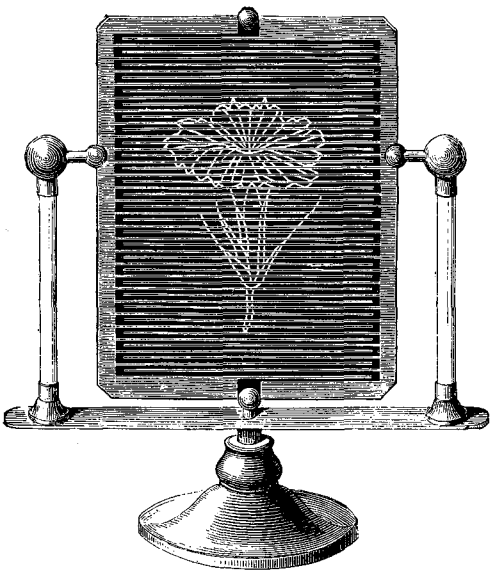

movement through this century by great writings which resonate to its principles. It would be wrong to say of either Joyce or Borges that they were "conservative" novelists—yet they are immensely feared by the liberal imagination. They are free and skeptical, belonging to no party, stating no doctrine, interested in and detached by art. In another interview Borges once responded to the quintessential question of our times: "What should the role of the artist be in a society as threatened as ours?" Clearly the implication was that he should speak out—perhaps, as the phrase goes, *make a statement*—on the environment or the draft or nuclear disarmament. But he said instead, resisting praise, "I think that poetry and beauty will prevail. I have no use for politics. I am not politically minded. I am aesthetically minded, philosophically perhaps. I don't belong to any party. In fact, I disbelieve in politics and in nations. I disbelieve also in richness, in poverty. Those things are illusions. But I believe in my own destiny as a good or bad or indifferent writer."

The class of 1899 have been wonderfully indifferent to liberal politics, like Gulliver in Lilliput. And for that they remain a mystery unsolved for the liberal mind. But of course they knew what they were doing: Joyce said that one of the weapons of the artist was silence, and Borges, that another was disbelief. When we honor their art it is not because there is occasional agreement to be found in it—only faithfulness to nature and history.

—Ronald Berman

Dr. Berman gave this address during the presentation of the first Ingersoll Prizes in Literature and the Humanities, December 8, 1983.

Fleeting Truths

Atari Inc. Chairman Joseph Morgan in a newspaper report about the fact that 1984 is expected to be a record year for the sale of home computers:

> No one yet has given the public a compelling reason, other than cheapness or fear, to buy a home computer.

A rabbit's foot or other talisman can be similarly justified, and won't require software, peripherals, or even electricity to ward off whatever it is that all of those people are worried about. □

Notables

The Lyricism of Nil

When Louis Armstrong improvised, he told a story. He might have been repetitious on occasion, and was sometimes banal, but rarely was he irrelevant, incoherent, incomprehensible, or—*tout court*—boring. Routinely, his listeners followed him with more or less emotional involvement and satisfaction. When Miles Davis improvises, he's also telling something, but something that can never be expressed in one adjective, for it is something like a report on his very own skill, a virtuoso intercourse between sound, instrument, and the one who pretends to control both. One may like his attempts to formulate this report, but—in all honesty and deep down in one's heart—one cannot fight off an overpowering tedium.

Things are much worse in literature. Poe, Maupassant, Twain, O. Henry, Chekhov, Hemingway, Greene, even Maugham—they all knew how to provide at least three pages of print that were loaded with ontological mystery, world views, emotions, and fleshed-out characters. They were telling stories, flashing humanness and mini or maxi tragedies. They were rarely dull. Then came modernism, avant garde, Dada, formalism, Tzara, stream of consciousness, interior monologue, Breton, surrealism, and—ultimately—*le nouveaux roman.* The universe has been reduced to signs, flattened into a tapestry of impulses and itches, made hopelessly boring, sounding like a nonstop warble that tries to explain something and says nothing. That's where Donald Bartheleme, the great discolored hope of American literature—according to some—comes in *(Overnight to Many Distant Cities;* Putnam; New York). He blabs, indulges in disjointed lyricism, juggles trivia, constructs texts that are meant to be something and are not, is everlastingly and overpoweringly bromidic, and is irrevocably called "delightful" by insipid cognoscenti. Under the atrocious oppression of literary snobbery, he is published, critically dissected, promoted, hailed, praised, prized, and purchased by the lemmings of the current cultural shopping malls. And his customers know, deep down in their hearts, that he bores them to death, but they never dare to say it, as they are terrorized by the tyranny of New York trendsetters, literary sausage makers, blurb writers, and *New York Times* book reviewers. □

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Of Patriots and Praise

James Webb: *A Country Such as This;* Doubleday; New York.

by Bryce Christensen

With his latest work, James Webb has created an acceptable book for everyone except those who half a century ago declared war on everything which is valuable to the majority of Americans. *A Country Such as This* is a well-written novel by virtue of its believable characters, compelling descriptions, and engaging plot. In these dimensions, it is appreciably better than most contemporary novels. Moreover, *A Country Such as This* is unlike most current fiction in that it is written from an intelligently discernible point of view. Billed as "an epic novel of post-World War II America," Webb's work features Annapolis graduates and their families as its heroes and radical intellectuals as its villains. That puts it too baldly: Webb has not merely contrived a melodrama of white-hatted military men and treasonous radicals, since none of his characters is so lacking in virtue or free from vice as to obscure his or her essential humanity. Nonetheless, his most sympathetic characters are those who uphold the proud motto "Not self, but country," inscribed on the doors of the Naval Academy chapel. These are people who bravely accept their duty to fight America's wars in Korea and Vietnam and to support the government at home. They are airmen who would rather suffer at the hands of North Vietnamese torturers than join the "peace" movement's leaders in their cheerfully uttered lies. Law-abiding citizens, they never understand courts lenient toward criminals, journalists infatuated with campus obscenity and chaos, nor liberals indifferent to the defense of American freedom. They are middle-class, church-going patriots who still "thank God for a country such as this." Fictional figures of such bent should and will elicit sympathy and praise.

Similarly, Webb's portrayals of the antiwar activists as elitist, self-deceived supporters of totalitarianism, of the SDS cadres as cowardly analogues to Hitler's brown shirts, of the media as "shrill and irresponsible" enemies of the American moral and ideological order, and of Nixon's enemies as hypocritical opportunists will occasion many penned-in exclamation points of approval in the margins. Thousands of readers bored by the endless litany of self-congratulatory liberal platitudes will heartily applaud Webb's refreshingly accurate description of wealthy and power-hungry idealists who condescended neither to tolerate the terrestrial realities of 20th-century America nor to accept responsibility for the hellish consequences of their own zealous crusades of high and egotistic principles.

Here, then, is a writer those who oppose the deterioration of national culture may claim as an ally. Because Mr. Webb demonstrates such clear-sighted cognizance of things real and quotidian, the urge is strong to indulge a little bit, to stoop to a few supportive clichés about this novel, to announce that it approximates, perhaps, literature and—more cautiously—art. Such a venial sin seems especially excusable at a time when amorphous fictions that romanticize the myths of liberal and Marxian dogma are routinely accorded the highest critical accolades not only in *The Nation* and in *The New York Times Book Review* but even in *The New York Review of Books.* Why not join in this war of unwarranted superlatives? Because all those disjointed and "progressive" forces which have inflated their currency in literary criticism have done so for the very reason that they adopted an ideological orthodoxy in the first place: they want no truths not conveniently tailored to comfortable preconceptions.

Hence, despite one's inclination to support Mr. Webb's world view, one must, in order to respect the integrity of criticism, restrict oneself to the adjective "good" in describing his book as a novel. Anything more would enter the trajectory of hyperbole. Certainly, *A Country Such as This* deserves to be widely read and is a valuable device for revising and restructuring entrenched and false beliefs and stereotypes of popular thinking. But between socially beneficial writing and literature—especially literature of epic ambitions—extends a vast territory of ideas and experiences which Mr. Webb seems to have never entered.

Purely for the sake of clarification,

Mr. Christensen is assistant editor of the Chronicles.

The *Chicago Tribune,* in a routine display of its literary savvy and critical subtlety, says the following about James Webb's writing:

'A Sense of Honor,' [is] a patriotic—but nonetheless realistic—novel . . . .

This is the type of intellectual and semantic sequitur which forces us to think that George Washington was a figment of someone's imagination, that oranges are manufactured, that seven little dwarfs under the hood of a Ford Mustang make it move forward, and that the author of these words is retarded and his editors at the *Tribune* were under the influence of some strange substance when they qualified this a sentence for publication. He is identified, in his credit line, as a "faculty member at Elgin Community College." What is he there? A chair or a blackboard? □

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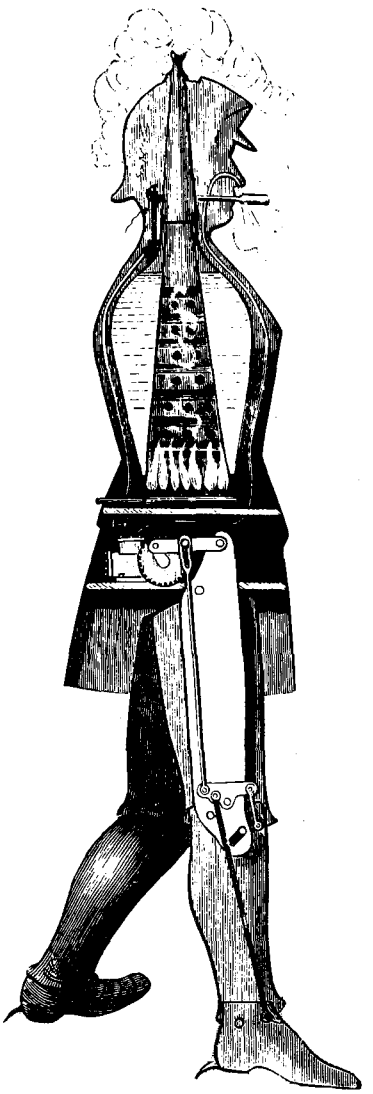
let's cast *A Country Such as This* against two novels written about a very different country. Webb's book begins with three Naval Academy graduates swearing blood brotherhood to one another with a steak knife in a bar; thereafter, Webb uses his three "brothers" primarily to create a Michenerian panorama of America's last 30 years. Although Dostoevski also reveals much of mid-19th-century Russia, his three Brothers Karamazov fathom the psychology of human agency in all times and in all places. Taken together, his three brothers—Ivan, in his intellectual skepticism; Alyosha, in his intense faith; and Dmitri, in his tortured sensuality which metamorphoses into passionate devotion—summarize the breadth of man's possibilities. Webb achieves a less impressive complementarity with his threesome—Judd, the devil-may-care hillbilly Marine who becomes a preacher and congressman; Red, the Polish family man, pilot, and Orientophile; and Dingy, the self-destructive Jewish pianist and scientist. If Webb has consciously tried to parallel Dostoevski's three-brother paradigm, then the comparison of the two serves only as a measure of how far his adequate talent falls short of Dostoevski's caliber. The hospital prayers which turn Judd from aimless sex to warm and folksy sermons are to Dmitri's transmutation of soul while in prison, which turns his compulsive but dissipated energy into resounding hymns to God, as a roller coaster is to an earthquake. Similarly, the "suicide" of tropical self-exile that Dingy commits when his scientific obsessions fail to bring fulfillment seems trivial when contrasted with Ivan's conversation with the Devil as his Euclidian mind slides into madness.

But another Russian epic, written in part to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon, suggests itself as an even more natural foil. In his last years, Tolstoy even disowned *War and Peace* because its patriotic elements violated his new sense of the universal brotherhood of man. But the international readership of more than a century has reduced the credibility of this harsh judgment. Like *A Country Such as This,* Tolstoy's novel is a sweeping attempt both to depict and to



evaluate a specific period of national political, military, and social turmoil. But because it transcends the limitations of those historical particulars, readers around the world who know and care little about these particulars continue to respond deeply to the ponderings and probings of Pierre and Boris as they struggle to establish the meaning not merely of Russia in 1812, but of life and death at any time or in any place. In this work, as in Dostoevski's, the historical Russianness of the characters is finally quite thin and incidental, while their timeless humanness is very thick. Unfortunately, Mr. Webb allows the exchange between Americanness and 20th-century events to dominate his vision, thus sacrificing the enduring for the topical. Except for Judd, his characters naively accept life as modern, red-blooded Americans tend to do, without much wrestling with existential questions. And Judd's struggle with and resolution of these questions is far too sketchily defined to give the book a place on the shelf of serious literary exertions.

The need for creative endeavors by those who are proud to be American and who will bring that pride to bear upon our current national crisis of the spirit is critical. There are reasons to give Mr. Webb his due as a competent novelist endowed with a lucidity of vision.

In *Chronicles of Culture* we are fully aware of, and feel a healthy respect for, that area of creativity which influences what we are inclined to call the intermediate culture. It is a vast sociocultural expanse where attitudes that define the epoch are formed. The intermediate culture filters knowledge, principles, and normative prescriptions that had been previously worked out by the purveyors of ideas, and translates them into popularly acceptable patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior. This is how the popular writer, artist, moviemaker, operating through fiction, music, fashion, determine the face of contemporaneity. Liberalism, radicalism, Marxism, and, a few decades ago, fascism, were all ideologies that knew how to exploit this chemistry of modern culture—often using it for nefarious political ends. We who wish to free our civilization and our society from the sham and cant of bankrupt and anti-human paradigms need authors like

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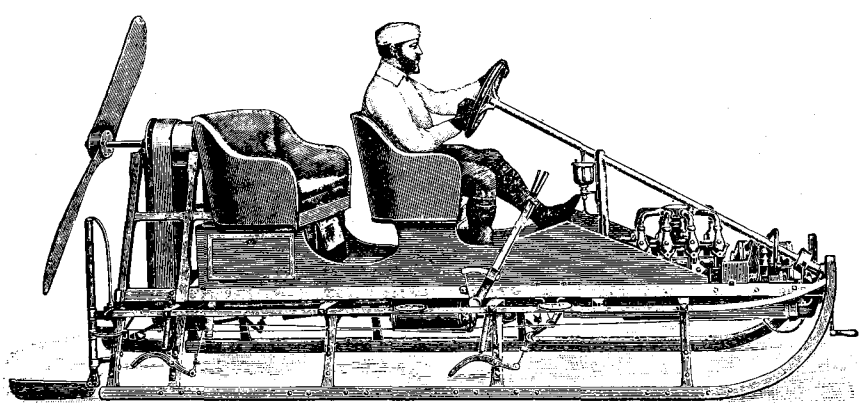
James Webb to convey our difficult and complex message to large audiences. But first and foremost, we need those who would be able to formulate that message in all due grandeur, magnitude, and intellectual richness. Consequently, the finitude of Mr. Webb's achievement must be made clear and perhaps also explained.

A likely place to begin is with Mr. Webb's theme that "loyalty to people and culture were the key to life," which he applies to both the Japanese and Americans. This is certainly a correct observation, but as it is developed in *A Country Such as This,* this theme does not evolve into either moral or ontological dimensions. Moreover, as an ideological principle, it provides no adequate foundation for promoting that kind of American patriotism which may demonstrate what's universal and timeless in our national ethos. Except for Amerindians, no one is an ethnic American. Americans are Americans not by race but because either they or their ancestors reached for human ideals and possibilities beyond those of their parents or fellow countrymen. From England, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Russia, China, Cuba, and scores of other countries, people came, and continue to come, to America for the sake of freedoms, ideas, hopes, spiritual and civic rights *not* found among *their* people nor in *their* cultures. By a narrow-minded standard, this emigration might be construed as lack of national loyalty. But by a larger and truer standard, it proclaimed and validated the firmest loyalty to humankind. America is not one continuous people or national culture to which loyalty can be sworn in the same way as the Japanese did in Bushido; rather, it is many peoples and many cultures melded together by a single set of priceless supranational humane aspirations embodied in the rarest of national institutions.

It is therefore sadly ironic that the communism that Webb's characters oppose so selflessly continues to win propaganda victories as the only truly transcultural political movement, even as it relentlessly extirpates all that is idiosyncratic, creative, and beautiful in the cultures of Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Cuba, China, and Russia itself. The very doctrine which is supposed to make national borders irrelevant inevitably transforms them into barbed-wire corrals for its own people. Consequently, as the Communist International reduces more and more people to starvation of body and spirit, tens of thousands will continue to risk their lives and to sacrifice a part of their culture by pouring into America, or into lands protected by America, so that they will not be under the heel of a half-dozen ideologically provincial Great Russians. To be truly international at this juncture in history is necessarily to be pro-American. The only possible way to promote the interests of Nicaraguans, Poles, Cambodians, Ethiopians, and Ukranians simultaneously is to support America, not simply as a people, a piece of geography, or a set of economic interests, but as the only viable champion of the most beneficent possibilities in the world. Defending America is therefore more than defending the 240 million people who live within the United States; it is protecting, in Lincoln's worthy phrase, "the last, best hope on earth." Hence, to be truly and completely "American" is, contrary to the illusions of some Daughters of the American Revolution, to be profoundly international in outlook, and opening a cognitive and existential perspective on this dialectical complexity would give a literary work its status.

For the writer who wishes to write "the great American novel," as Mr. Webb apparently attempts to do, these are essential truths. The focus in *A Country Such as This* upon the global struggle against communism implies a sound understanding of the worldwide significance of the American military. And the appreciative portrayal of Japanese culture evinces a commendably international sensitivity. But the "international" sensitivity of a great American writer must be not broad but deep. Like Dostoevski's and Tolstoy's—but also like Hawthorne's, Faulkner's, and Bellow's. The best American talent is always rooted in some particular locale—the Puritan villages of New England, the plantations of the Old South or the fundamentalist towns of the New South, or the Depression-era slums of Chicago —and draws nourishment from a vital appreciation for the way these locales shaped and were shaped by America's distinctive liberties, covenants, and promise. But it goes deeper, deeper than all historical Americanism. It reaches down into the common heart of all humanity. Mr. Webb has his roots in good, fertile soil. But until those roots penetrate deeper, the leaves that grow on them cannot be laurels. □



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Terms of Discourse

A telling way to approach the textual works of James Webb is to examine the field of discourse into which they have emerged, to look not at the novels *as* novels but as statements among those and in relation to the dominant formulations existent across the American cultural horizon. One of the greatest misnomers in the past 20 years, one that is treated as if it is correct, on target, and telling, is *counterculture* as variously applied to those in opposition to what was perceived as being the reigning, hegemonic notions of social and personal deportment and attitudes. One of the key, defining characteristics of the counterculture of the 1960's was not long hair, beads, tattered bluejeans, drug use, love of acid rock, or thoroughgoing vulgarity, but its opposition to the American military efforts in Vietnam. Groups don't form around things like hairstyles, for if they did, then the bands of women who congregate under blow-dryers every Saturday morning in salons across the country would be the most potent association imaginable. Rather, they coalesce—or coagulate—around issues, and *the* issue at that time was the war. One of the reasons why there is nothing *counter* about the group in question is that it was supported by the very class that it appeared to oppose. Businessmen cranked out the chintzy cast peace-symbol medallions and resistance-fist T-shirts, the day-glo posters and the black lights, the records and the incense; the coverage of protest activities wasn't limited to the underground press but was broadcast and peddled in the national media. To be a man in uniform was to be an odd man out, whereas to be something that looked like it was the result of a 10-year stay on a desert island was to be okay. This is not to say that servicemen didn't get free drinks in bars during the period or that there was no support for them on personal and political levels. It is to say, however, that the operative terms that permeated society in the 60's, and which, to a degree, continue to do so today, are those which make the putative counterculture the group in power, otherwise known as "the Establishment."

This becomes more clear through an example, that of a massive tome written by the well-known Conrad scholar Frederick R. Karl, *American Fictions 1940-1980: A Comprehensive History and Critical Evaluation;* (Harper & Row; New York). Karl is certainly not someone who could be confused with being a member of the so-called counterculture; the attention spans of such people aren't long enough to imagine the scope of Karl's project (22 minutes is about the longest they can go: the average playing time of one side of an LP record and the length of a TV sitcom). Karl, one supposes on the basis of the list of his works, is more of a solid burgher than an aging, bebopping bohemian. Chapter one of *American Fictions,* "Themes and Counterthemes," opens with Norman Mailer's vision of America as excrement, which Mailer went on at length about in his 1967 antiwar novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Karl doesn't find this image perverse. Instead, he stresses that it is paradigmatic: "a prototypical postwar fiction." In effect, to write an antiwar novel is to be typical, to do anything else is to be abnormal.

In the section "Vietnam as a Metaphor for Life," Karl writes about Tim O'Brien, Robert Stone, Michael Herr, and Philip Caputo. He claims:

> What distinguishes fiction about the Vietnam War from that about World War II is its disembodied quality. . . . The men enter a surreal area when they fight a battle—jungle, sky, mud, whirling copters, a phantasmal enemy, loss of distinction between friend and foe. The lack of differentiation, the sense that the world has receded, the recognition that individual sacrifice is worth nothing, all make the men hang together in the presentness of Now. What remains is escape. . . .

Duty, which military personnel since at least the time of Sparta have recognized as being paramount, has been perverted in such thinking so as to be redefined as "saving one's ass." Where does James Webb, a man who acknowledges the original meaning of the concept, fit in? In the 595 pages of text in *American Fiction* he gets this much in 8-point type in a footnote: "Of note as fiction are James Webb's *Fields of Fire* (1978) and O'Brien's earlier *If I Die in a Combat Zone* (1973)." O'Brien's later *Going After Cacciato* (1978), characterized as an "ingenious and convincing book" wherein the protagonist plans to "escape the Vietnam War by going to Paris," receives consideration. Webb's book disappears: its vocabulary speaks of *engagement,* not escape, and is therefore alien to the reigning code of discourse. (One could make a strong argument that *Fields of Fire* isn't particularly good in a formalistic sense and therefore doesn't require consideration, but Karl doesn't as he deigns it notable.)

A Country Such as This, which is not some crude, flag-waving, "come on, boys, over the next hill" comic book-like tract, but an attempt to show that good, ordinary people, who are faced with pain and doubts, who are not rabid fascists or killing machines, can, did, and do serve something higher than their own glandular urges, has disappeared from social discourse, has been overwhelmed by the droning depreciations of virtue. (Karl's book, of course, couldn't have dealt with it, though it probably wouldn't have received more than *Fields of Fire* if it were possible.) Webb's book is an anomaly which, in this age of belly tucks and cellulite vacuuming, must be removed. Webb's efforts, then, are truly countercultural. (GSV) □

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A Poet of Passion

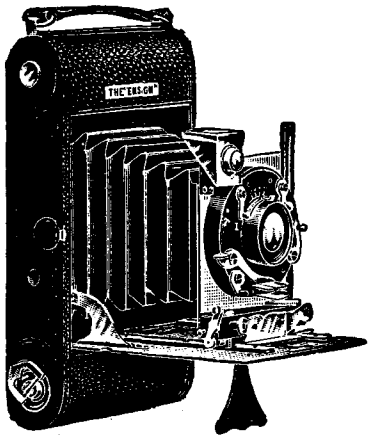
Peter Alexander: *Roy Campbell: A Critical Biography;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Gregory Wolfe

South African-born poet Roy Campbell elicited two very different kinds of response during his life. Here are two representative samples. From a review of Campbell's first book of poetry, *The Flaming Terrapin:* "We have spun . . . back to an exuberant relish of the sheer sonority and clangour of words, words enjoyed for their own gust, and flung down to fit each other with an easy rapture of phrase." The other kind of reaction to Campbell may be seen in a later essay by Stephen Spender, where he calls Campbell "an infamous slanderer . . . a liar, a gross slanderer, an empty-headed boaster, a coward, a bully and a Fascist." It is a real tragedy that Spender's opinion is still the conventional wisdom about Campbell 25 years after the poet's death in a car accident. Peter Alexander's biography, because of its own half-heartedness in the face of accumulated antagonism to Campbell, won't do much to alter the status quo.

Campbell is a sort of test case, a litmus whereby a critic's attitudes toward politics and religion, and the ideological upheavals of the 20th century, can be determined. Campbell is thus like his friend Wyndham Lewis: both men spurned the armchair socialism and sexual deviance of the Bloomsbury Group, both temporarily became fascists and remained supporters of Franco's regime in Spain, and both accused the British left of having explicitly and implicitly sold out to communist totalitarianism. Campbell, however, became an even more outrageous figure by penning long, hyperbolic satires in heroic couplets against Bloomsbury and the Auden generation, by embracing Roman Catholicism and the Catholic cultures of Provence and Spain, and by glorifying himself as a macho man-of-action in the Hemingway mold.

Like many artists, Campbell created a persona behind which he could hide his ego; in addition, he constantly added brushstrokes to the caricature others had drawn of him. But neither he nor



they were fair to the spirit and poetic sensibility of Roy Campbell. Many critics treat Campbell as a self-destructive psychiatric case who was his own enemy. They never consider that the utterly politicized and radicalized state of Europe between the world wars might have been the real enemy. By denying the disease of Western culture, the already-infected critics naturally attribute the illness solely to Campbell.

The gravamen of the charges leveled at Campbell is that his personality was divided and contradictory, capable of violence and mystical peace, insecure and deeply loving, drunken and devout. Peter Alexander, though he struggles to be fair to Campbell, takes the Freudian way out. Early on, Alexander explains that Campbell's love/hate relationship with his father is the key to the poet's "seemingly contradictory behaviour in later years."

> It helps to explain . . . his natural anarchy and his attraction, during the early 1930's, to the orderliness of the European dictatorships. It explains both his early anti-clericalism, and his later adherence to the authoritative teachings of Roman Catholicism. And it explains both his hatred of 'regimented' modern life, and his happiness in the British Army.

With a poet's whole life interpreted in three sentences, one wonders why the remaining 200 pages are necessary.

Alexander's use of the phrase *"seemingly* contradictory" indicates that he is ambivalent about his own explanation, but he never pauses to search out an underlying unity in Campbell's life. To a certain type of mind (Chesterton's, for example), the presence of such an array of contradictions within a single personality would hint at the existence of paradox, one difficult to explicate, but no less deeply true for that. In fact, there is a unifying thread running throughout Campbell's life which no one has ever traced. Much of Campbell's sensibility can be understood in terms of his childhood and youth in turn-of-the-century South Africa. He acquired early a prowess in hunting that would lend itself later to distorted bragging. More importantly, the young Campbell developed an intense love for the bushveld and its animal inhabitants. This intimacy with nature had nothing of the deracinated Sierra Club idealization about it, but partook of the more ancient role of man as hunter and steward of nature. A healthful sensuousness pervades Campbell's poetry, not only in African and Provençal poems like "The Zebras" and "Estocade," but in the mystical language of his translation from St. John of the Cross. Whereas a writer like D. H. Lawrence, who was raised in a mining town, could idolize the thudding sexual power of a jungle he never knew, Campbell's sensuality grew out of direct

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knowledge and remained capable of much finer shades of thought and feeling.

The role Campbell's father played in his life was immense and not merely the dominant father/repressed son syndrome portrayed in textbooks. According to Alexander, Campbell's father was an industrious doctor who was available at any time, and who treated black and white alike, a trait which "earned him the undying love of the Zulu people." Roy therefore lived in an environment where the ideal of noblesse oblige on the part of the whites toward the blacks, which liberals find so impossible to appreciate, was practiced. For the rest of his life, Campbell would long for a society which was both hierarchically ordered and in which all classes would live in comity. Campbell also possessed a deep-seated admiration for the energy, self-sacrifice, and conservatism of the whites who pioneered South Africa, men and women who built schools and harbors. This work ethic prevented Campbell from having sympathy with the union-dominated welfare state in Britain, which the more leisured, imperial Britons found much more acceptable.

As so often happens, these youthful impressions were submerged in the lad who sailed north to begin his studies at Oxford University. Though he was always an "outsider" (a crucial factor in his life), Campbell very quickly became part of the circle of bright young artists in post-War England, which included his roommate William Walton, Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, Aldous Huxley, and Jacob Epstein. The tall, lean, strikingly handsome Campbell was captured by Augustus John's brush and by Wyndham Lewis's transparent portrait of "Zulu Blades" in *The Apes of God.* During this period of anarchic creativity and lax morality Campbell married his strong-willed and sensual wife Mary, and produced the linguistically exuberant *The Flaming Terrapin,* a rambling allegorical poem that earned him instant acclaim, more because of the poem's decidedly un-Georgian vitality of language than because of its somewhat muddled ideas.

Riding high on the success of *The Flaming Terrapin,* Campbell returned to South Africa, hoping to become the enfant terrible of letters and social criticism. Here Campbell entered a more serious and sadder period of his life. The short-lived journal *Voorslag* ("Whip-crack") which Campbell edited was perhaps modeled on the strident criticism of Wyndham Lewis's *Blast,* and Campbell soon lost his popularity by castigating the older generation for a tacit policy of apartheid. Many critics see a "left-wing" Campbell during these years, one who contrasts with the later conservative; but the poet's desire for a unified culture without an arrogant master class lay at the root of his intemperate lashing out at his elders. Thus it was no "contradiction" that the fine South African poems of 1926 (e.g., "The Zulu Girl" and "Tristan da Cunha") exhibit the sensuousness and sensitivity of Campbell at his best.

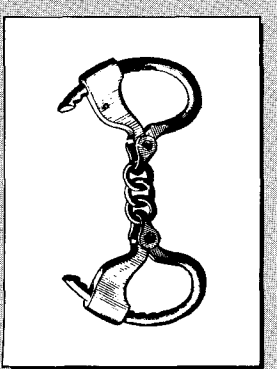
It was a dejected—but not much wiser—Campbell who returned to England to seek his literary fortune anew. He and Mary were invited to stay on the estate of Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, two major figures in the Bloomsbury and Georgian circles who, though husband and wife, were contentedly homosexual. Within months, Vita had seduced Mary Campbell, whose adoration for Vita was in marked contrast to the older woman's casualness: Vita was carrying on no less than five lesbian affairs at the same time. Here again the critics' conventional wisdom sees a "contradictory" Campbell: the insecure masculinity and jealousy of Campbell, and his feelings of rejection from literary circles (they argue), caused him during Mary's affair to become paranoid and resentful, leading on to further right-wing extremism. Apparently it does not occur

LIBERAL CULTURE

ERA at Work

According to an article in the *Chicago Tribune*:

> Inmates at San Quentin prison have no right to prevent being watched by female guards, even while taking showers, being strip-searched, or using the toilet, a federal judge ruled.
>
> U.S. District Judge Spencer Williams dismissed a suit brought by three prisoners, saying employment of female correctional officers at the prison did not violate constitutional rights of male inmates.
>
> California Atty. Gen. John Van de Kamp said the ruling recognizes and protects employment rights of women in correctional facilities.
>
> 'Whatever privacy interests an inmate may have are, as has been recognized by Judge Williams, certainly secondary to the employment rights and security concerns in question,' Van de Kamp said.



Next, we bet, there'll be photo reportages in *Playboy* or *Penthouse* on female guards watching the shower stalls and giggling. It certainly beats the male stripper shows on ladies' night at the local pub. □

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to such critics that Campbell may simply have grown up. In addition to normal jealousy, Mary's affair forced Campbell to evaluate the moral and literary health of Bloomsbury, and what he saw was smugness, hypocrisy, mutual flattery, intellectual flabbiness, and a sexual anarchy that was more perverse than Arcadian. The result was a scathing, erratic, and hilarious satire in heroic couplets called *The Georgiad,* which aimed at the same satiric targets as Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God,* published the same year. It is difficult to convey the humor of *The Georgiad,* where the catholic sexual tastes of Bloomsbury are mocked ("in the subtle strife of heads or tails/The latter, as by magic, prevails") in verse filled with wicked portraits, such as that of Vita and her lesbian love poetry ("straight in raptured sonnets will expose/The bunions of her gnarled iambic toes").

In spite of his biting satiric humor, Campbell was stunned, hurt, and insecure. He had now estranged himself from the literary establishment of England; some of its members vowed never to mention Campbell's name in print (what has been called Campbell's "paranoia" was usually sharp realism about his enemies). Campbell left England for Provence where, surprisingly, Mary joined him and their relationship slowly grew more solid. In southern France Campbell found a country dry and scrubby, not unlike the South African bushveld, and he threw himself into various occupations, including fishing, horse-breaking, and bullfighting. In England he had confronted a deracinated, urban literary aristocracy, utterly divided from the mass of the English people and plunged in immorality and triviality. The ancient folk culture of Provence offered Campbell something far more akin to his vision of an integrated society, where poets, aristocrats, and fishermen came together in communal feasts and games and shared a common heritage. This central fact has been obscured by the passages in his autobiographical works which take braggadocio into the realm of self-gratifying fantasy. Nonetheless, only displaced urban intellectuals could miss the moving passages in the autobiography *Light on a Dark Horse* about Provençal feasts, nautical jousting, and the fisherman's life. It was here that Campbell wrote some of his finest lyric poetry, such as "Mass at Dawn" and "Horses on the Camargue," which went into the volume of poems entitled *Adamastor* and gained him another brief round of critical acclaim. In this book, and in the next, *Flowering Reeds* (possibly his best), there are poems which show that pain is necessary for a full experience of reality, poems in which final peace is hard-won and therefore more convincing.

Campbell and his family went on to live in Spain and Portugal. Both countries represented to Campbell the integrated culture that he sought in Provence. When, as an older man, Campbell lived in London and entertained guests, his parties would be a wild assortment of friends, including painters, policemen, ex-soldiers, diplomats, bullfighters, butchers and sculptors. As Peter Alexander rightly says: "The artificial or real barriers that divide men simply did not exist for Campbell." Campbell's conversion to the Roman Catholic Church is consistently compared by critics to that of Evelyn Waugh or T. S. Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism as an "escape" from personal problems. Yet Campbell's own growing sense of morality and the need for spiritual direction had been leading in that direction for a long time. His conversion was not made under the influence of the English Catholic Revival, with its witty and dynamic spokesmen Ronald Knox, Hilaire Belloc, and G. K. Chesterton, but as the result of observing the faith of French and Spanish peasants. By his own existential route, Campbell had come to defend Christendom in much the same way as the fiercely logical Chesterton. The underrated book of poems *Mithraic Emblems* comes from this period, and incorporates Campbell's idea of suffering in a specifically Christian context. His Catholicism also enabled Campbell to labor for 11 years on translating the poems of the 16th-century Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross, even though these years were heavily politicized by his defense of the nationalists in the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish Civil War brought out the best and worst in Campbell, and has earned him continual obloquy. While he undoubtedly romanticized Franco and the Spanish nationalists, and made the serious mistake of temporarily supporting Hitler and Mussolini, Campbell's revulsion at the Soviet-directed campaign to dominate Spain has had ample historical documentation, despite the mythology maintained by liberals. In the atmosphere of hysteria which gripped most intellectuals in the late 1930's, Campbell foolishly indulged in anti-Semitism and conspiracy theories. His accusation that leftist intellectuals wrote Soviet propaganda for profit was nonsensical and negated his valid insight into their fundamental support for communist totalitarianism. After the war this led to further alienation from the English literary society he still depended on for money and an audience. Campbell's insecurity and resentment grew and aged him prematurely.

Campbell's last years were melancholy but not without their comforts. His creative poetic energy, which he termed "the sweat of other activities," dried up as age and ill health curbed these activities. He turned instead to translations of Baudelaire, Lorca, and others. Like all the best translations, there is a good deal of Campbell himself in these poems, while they remain faithful to the tone and structure of the originals. The St. John of the Cross translations, for example, have a mystical intensity that emphasizes the redemptive value of suffering and has the ring of experience, even though Campbell's liberal critics have been deaf to his spirituality. It was a long way from the "clangour" and "gust" of words in *The Flaming Terrapin* to the taut simplicity of St. John of the Cross, but the quality of his passion never changed. □

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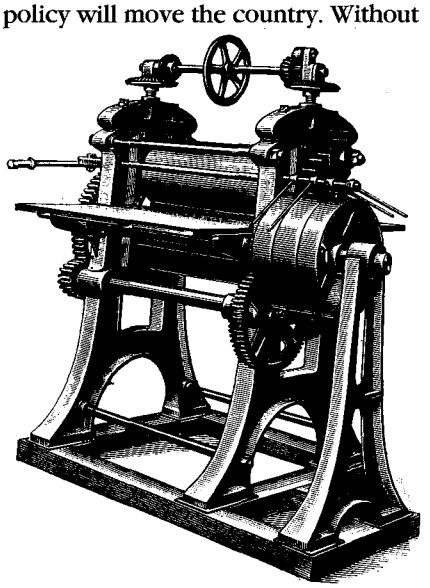
Ideology & Realism

Irving Kristol: *Reflections of a Neoconservative;* Basic Books; New York.

by William R. Hawkins

The term *neoconservative* is more often used by those who oppose the movement than by those who are included within its ranks. Criticism from the left has been particularly vicious because neoconservatives are reformed liberals who are consequently viewed as traitors by their former associates. On the right, the response has been marked by caution. Some neocons—Roger Starr, Norman Podhoretz, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Michael Novak, and James Q. Wilson—have found ready acceptance. Others, such as Nathan Glazer, Daniel Bell, and Seymour Martin Lipset have been met with skepticism because they have failed to break firmly with liberalism. Still, the advent of the neoconservatives provided a powerful reinforcement to the right. Their work through the *Public Interest, Commentary,* and the American Enterprise Institute brought forward a new wave of nonliberal thought when it was most needed in the wake of the Goldwater defeat, the Great Society, and the New Left. Foremost among the neocons is Irving Kristol, a man who fully accepts both the term and the movement to the right.

Kristol sees the pattern of past American politics as a conflict between the moderate left (liberalism) and the radical left (socialism), with only an occasional "interregnum of conservative government whose function it is to consolidate and ratify liberal reforms" (as Eisenhower did for the New Deal and Nixon did for the Great Society). In the late 1960's, the moderate left collapsed under the pressures from the counterculture and the New Left. In order to stop the radicals, Kristol and others turned to a revitalized right. Kristol sees fatal flaws in the old conservatism that require correction if a lasting defense against the radicals is to be erected, thus the *neo* movement. The problem with the right is that it has no ideology, by which Kristol means a vision of the future toward which conservative policy will move the country. Without



such a vision, the right has nothing positive with which to sway the public. The right can only criticize the leftist vision or its mode of implementation. The right can win power occasionally as a backlash, but cannot maintain itself in power or win broad, dedicated support without a positive program.

What has passed for conservative ideology is simply the "free market" of classical economics. Kristol points out that this is inadequate. An economic theory cannot substitute for a comprehensive view of man and society. Economics is a part, not a whole. Of course, most conservatives do have a concept of the good society which reaches beyond materialism, but the centerplace given to economics eclipses it. Worse, the attempt to defend "the market" in its purest form has led conservatives to defer to the libertarians. Milton Friedman advocates the legalization of hard drugs on the grounds of libertarian consistency. Try convincing any parent with teen-aged children that either conservatism or capitalism has the answers when that is part of the platform!

Kristol respects the work of F. A. Hayek and Russell Kirk concerning the importance of a moral order which has evolved over time, but feels that their perspective is too nostalgic. It looks backward to a simpler time when virtue, honor, and duty were enthroned in the popular mind and supported by institutions of authority in the family, church, and state. In today's world, constant change and the "open society" present conservatives with the difficult problems of restoring values, controlling change, and rebuilding institutions. In other words, effecting a counterrevolution. A laissez-faire attitude is insufficient to accomplish this task. The self-denial of government power or other sources of authority in behalf of conservatism is to practice unilateral disarmament in the midst of a war.

Kristol feels that the classical liberal view of man which spawned the cult of individualism is behind most of today's problems. It has motivated the counterculture's assault on Western civilization; paralyzed the right's response to this threat; contributed to the left's preoccupation with questions of equality; and provided socialism with an issue of mass appeal. Kristol wishes to escape this crisis by drawing neoconservative strength from premodern philosophy in the manner of Leo Strauss. Classical political thought established that the proper end of politics was a good society. In this framework, society is the

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central concern. The basis of the larger society called "the nation" is the smaller society of the family. The strength of society is its anchor of stability in a sea of change. Individuals draw sustenance and meaning from this system of mutual support. Of course, libertarians have branded any collectivist criterion as socialist and many conservatives have been foolish enough to believe them. However, Kristol draws a vital distinction.

Socialism has had two bases of appeal. To the intellectuals it has presented the utopian ideal of equality. But equality has not been the primary concern of the masses. The real mass appeal of socialism has been the offer of protection against the storm of anarchy perceived to accompany economic laissez-faire. While capitalism does work, most people are not in a position strong enough to weather the occasional bouts of unemployment, business failure, illness, or bad luck which befalls them (or which threatens to befall them). In the preindustrial society, there were traditional fallback positions available: the extended family, community solidarity, subsistance farming. But in our mobile, interdependent economy, the individual is on his own and this loneliness scares him.

The division of labor requires that everyone be plugged into the system to obtain a livelihood. Once the individual is out of the system or if the system fails, he is in trouble. Conservatives of the early days of the industrial revolution worried about this, alternately complaining about the harshness of an impersonal market and proposing state intervention to compensate for the loss of traditional social arrangements. However, conservatives eventually fell prey to classical economics (the better to defend private property from socialism) and abandoned this issue. Conservatism has been in decline ever since.

Kristol rejects the egalitarian aspect of socialism and opposes income equality. However, he wants to restore the idea of social responsibility to the right. He thus draws a distinction between the "social insurance" state and the "redistributive" state. The former would provide relief for temporary problems, like unemployment that results from the dynamics of the market economy. It would also provide old-age and medical insurance. Such programs would be financed as much as possible like real insurance programs. This differs from the redistributive state in important ways. Its aim is to alleviate temporary distress, not build up a permanent underclass of dependents. Likewise, its aim is protection, not revolution. It does not seek to promote income equality or to punish the successful. It does not seek to undermine capitalism or remold society to conform to utopian ideals. Instead, as Kristol argues, the paternalism involved should be used to foster traditional values of work and family rather than to undermine these values, as do current programs.

There are obvious political advan-

> Kristol is as nasty as ever to . . . members of *The Nation* family. He is lovably true to the persona we have enjoyed hating over the decades.
>
> **Robert Lekachman**
> ***The Nation***

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Decadence

The seeming anomaly of the persistent, ever-growing appeal of supernatural terror tales in a secular age rests on the assumption that psychological secularization is a phenomenon that is uniform and unidirectional, leading inexorably into an era of profane consciousness, a totally "disenchanted" world. The reality, however, is more complex. In the modern world, no single system of meaning has replaced the weakened sacred cosmos of the past. Nor does any seem likely to, given the jolts encountered by the dogmas of rationalism, scientism, and Marxism. The modern condition is one of partial or "arrested" secularization in which . . . public norms of functionality fail to satisfy the desires of many people who, in turn, construct their own eclectic, provisional systems of "ultimate" meaning.

—from "Horrors in the Age of Disbelief" by Robert F. Geary

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus—Perceptibles
Waste of Money—The American Proscenium—Screen
Music—Notables—Liberal Culture—Journalism

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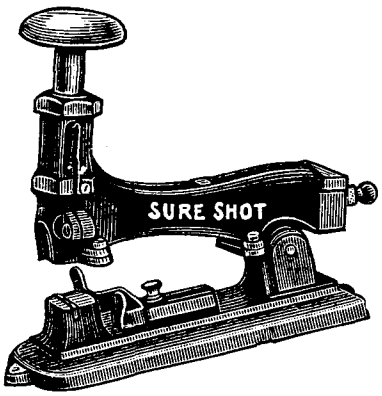
tages to such a program. Conservatives have been notoriously unsuccessful in trying to convince the public that unemployment compensation or social security programs are threats to freedom. Apparent indifference to mass unemployment during the Great Depression sent the right into eclipse for half a century. There is a large number of hard-working, patriotic citizens with conservative social values who are politically alienated from the right purely on this issue of economic insecurity and instability. They do not consider themselves part of the perennial welfare class and probably resent the existence of such a class as much as anyone. But they also realize that they are vulnerable to the workings of economic forces over which they have no control. They are not going to elect as guardians of society leaders who claim that society needs no guardians. Kristol hopes to win these people away from the liberal coalition with a conservative social program aimed at the working class. President Reagan's "safety net" is potentially in this framework, though it needs to be oriented more towards blue-collar and working-poor families than towards the underclass which will always vote with the left.

The desire for stability is also reflected in Kristol's approach to the corporation. He states that:

> the majority of those who work for a living, of whatever class, have learned to prefer the security, the finely calibrated opportunities for advancement, the fringe benefits, and the paternalism of the large corporation to the presumed advantages of employment in smaller firms.

Most people don't like risks. Although Kristol rejects the view of J. K. Galbraith that large firms control their markets and have eliminated competition, he notes that large corporations do exhibit smaller fluctuations in prices and output and greater survivability than do small businesses. Corporations are attacked from all sides, however, and their leaders do not know how to fight back or even take the time to think about fighting back. Populists fear the concentration of economic power; socialists see the corporation as the final monopolist stage of capitalism whose oppression will trigger the revolution; and libertarians complain that corporate managers deviate from the "free market" ideal of classical theory. Kristol dismisses these criticisms as dangerous misunderstandings about how the world works. Corporate capitalism not only provides material abundance, but can behave as a conservative institution. Rightist intellectuals need to provide a basis for legitimacy for the corporation within society.



On this point Kristol seems to echo points raised much earlier by Peter F. Drucker and most fully put into effect by the Japanese. Japan has managed to build a highly efficient economy that still includes traditional values and stability. The corporation with its employment security and social benefit programs plays an important part in this synthesis, and relieves much of the pressure which would otherwise exist for expanding public welfare programs.

To add further strength to the conservative cause, Kristol calls for a heightened sense of integral nationalism. "Nationalism in our time is probably the most powerful of political emotions." While patriotism is closely associated with the right, Kristol feels that, again, economic issues have hogged center stage, preventing conservatives from taking full advantage of wider opportunities. Nationalism fits the neoconservative/traditionalist view of society as a vertically structured, "organic" system embodied with moral and cultural values. It is the antithesis of the Marxist view of materialistically defined horizontal classes constantly at war with one another. It is also opposed to the atomistic individualism of the classical liberals. Kristol believes that nationalistic feelings have been weakened in the U.S. by appeals to supposedly supranational ideals. Woodrow Wilson's "war to end all wars" to "make the world safe for democracy" led Americans to "disregard the obvious for the sake of a quixotic pursuit of impossible ideals." This liberal approach could provide no counter to the antinationalistic stand of the New Left which supported foreign ideological movements against its own country.

Nationalism is an ideology. It should lead American policymakers beyond the minimal concerns of national security. It should provide a vision of what a future world should look like and inspire a coherent strategy to move the world in the chosen direction. The U.S. is a Great Power and its people should embrace this as their destiny. Crusades for democracy and human rights are unrealistic. A pride in the achievement of American-Western Civilization and a desire to attain new peaks will provide the justification for policy. While the U.S. should not seek out unnecessary confrontations, it must realize that it has implacable enemies in the Soviet bloc and Third World which diplomacy cannot appease. When an "us" versus "them" confrontation occurs, nationalism should produce such a ground swell of support for "us" that those on the left who favor "them" will be isolated and powerless. Unfortunately, Kristol merely expresses this as a hope without presenting a plan by which this happy state could be brought about. □

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Doing Less with More

Barbara Matusow: *The Evening Stars: The Making of the Network News Anchor;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Gordon M. Pradl

Turning on the tube at seven o'clock each weekday evening may be the most massive act of collective delusion ever practiced by a culture. Lusting after this goddess of immediacy, aptly called the news, viewers sit glazed and numbed each and every night before their screens. The networks are aware of this situation, so they increasingly program up-to-the-minute on-the-spot newsbreaking reporting. And with cable television, one at last can never *not* be without the soothing libations of interpreted events. Naturally, we want to find out what's going on around us. There is, perhaps, an inborn curiosity related directly to our earliest strategies for survival. Events out in the world affect ourselves and others make up the fabric of our lives. But we have no experience until we actively participate in the telling of these events, put them into our own words, commit acts of interpretation. As long as we maintain primary control over these speech acts, are responsible for their style and integrity, our daily decisions foster freedom. But not surprisingly, forces "wiser" than ourselves prefer to make these decisions for us, prefer not to have to deal with the complexities and contradictions and common sense that might arise were we left alone to act for ourselves. And so the flood of predigested news swells ever more menacingly.

Although people want to assert their independence by establishing unique interpretations of events, they also desire to share in the powerful repetitions of the group, to acquiesce in world-building not their own. They want, in other words, to be assertive and docile at the same time. Newsgatherers, have pounced on this conflict and offer up an illusion that appears to fulfill both needs simultaneously. This is the fiction of mass "participation" in the evening news. There are no individual interpretations, just a predigested menu offered by the networks. As this is not easily discerned, the locus of our society's interpretive control moves from the inner resources of its citizens to the outer manipulations of lib culture.

The history of this trend is both long and varied; it effectively began when the programs established to report the news inverted their original purpose, that of being a conduit. The night watchman, the press, the radio, television, all were mediums designed to make events available to the public. Although these sources contained their biases, the event remained to be interpreted in black and white. But the situation changed, and the conduit function shifted to one of consumption. Subsequently, every event becomes news and since the thirst of the media can never be fully quenched, events are generated just in order that there be something to convey to a demanding public. Once this occurs, whatever distinction existed between news and entertainment (and the distinction remains dubious in the first place) ceases to exist.

And now Barbara Matusow appears with yet more "news"—in fact, the inside scoop by an honest-to-goodness insider—about the news. In *The Evening Stars: The Making of the Network News Anchor* she traces the evolution of television news since World War II. Not only does she explain, for instance, how Edward R. Murrow created a tradition of integrity within the fourth estate, but also how he signaled its eventual demise by "ushering in a peculiarly American part of the protagonist." Once begun, this trend inevitably leads to a "news" establishment whose first concern is gaining an audience; trying to deliver the news takes second place. This isn't a particularly shocking sense of priorities: Dan Rather's audience lead over his competitors means that a 30-second spot can be sold for $44,000, as compared to $35,000 for the team in third place. Such an advantage could add up to over $10,000,000 a year—no small sum when all you are doing is serving up the news to an adoring public.

Ms. Matusow feigns alarm at such "business" figures and the slide toward overt entertainment that continues to mark the national network news broadcasts, but because her way of viewing the world is so constrained by her own news-gathering affiliations, she fails to see the larger dimensions of the problem. Assorted homilies about the potential abuses of power are her idea of a thoughtful analysis of the absorption of news by entertainment. But such criticism belies her real purpose in writing the book: to serve as gossip columnist for the network news stars. Simply *everyone* is there—from John Cameron Swayse, Howard K. Smith, John Daly, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, and Ted Koppel. Scurrying both in front of and in back of the camera's eye, Ms. Matusow tells us why Tom Snyder failed to make the number-one seat in New York City; how Roger Mudd, during the final competition for the top spot at CBS, stayed above the fray, assuming the network owed him the job; how Barbara Walters was quietly sabotaged by Harry Reasoner, who, before going on the air, liked to hang around bars with his old cronies. And she reassuringly divulges the facts that Dan Rather, despite his aggressive qualities, is really a top-flight newsperson and that although he has a $10,000,000 salary, he lives a very unpretentious life-

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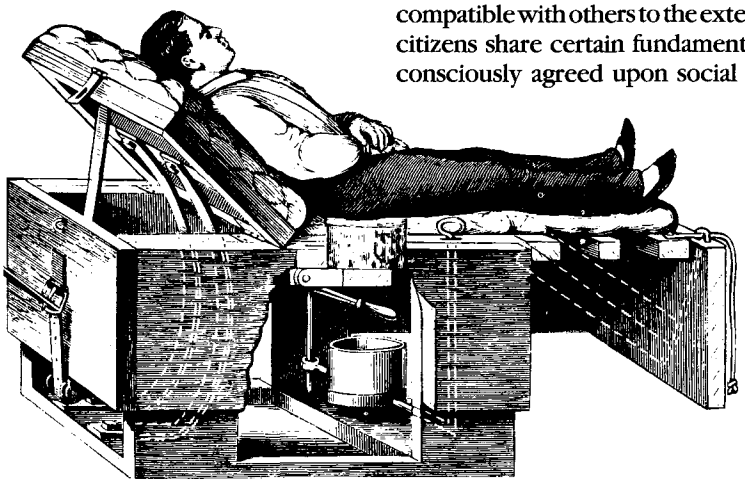
style in New York City.

The power of the network anchor is directly related to the direction of the cash flow. Today, the anchor is not unlike a sports "star." The economics of sports entertainment has totally inverted the direction of satisfaction in competition. With eyes always on the fan, not the opponent, the success of sports business is measured in terms of the relative hysteria whipped up among the spectators, not in terms of the inherent accomplishments of the participants. So in a sense, Dan Rather and Dave Winfield are similar,



just professionals doing their jobs.

The participation illusion must be maintained at all costs in the fantasy world created on the nightly newscasts. The audience must never become aware of how it is passively massaged and its perceptions externally controlled. One brilliant technique is the on-the-spot eyewitness interview with the person in the street. "Yes viewer, you are there and your voice is being heard." It doesn't matter that it is just another meaningless grunt that will be fairly balanced out in the best American tradition of objectivity and neutrality—two voices yea, two voices nay. Such surrogate presences supposedly validate the openness and unbiased nature of what is being reported. But this format dictates that there will never be time for serious interpretation and commentary.

Why has the conventional polarity between news and entertainment dissolved? In a society where citizens act, not merely react, the news functions in two ways: it provides data about events that genuinely affect life in the body politic; it provides a wide array of interpretations of these events consonant with a citizen's need to transform indirect events into useful direct experience. The citizen, in a real news environment remains free to choose from among competing interpretations. He is free to create his own experience, though this experience will be compatible with others to the extent that citizens share certain fundamental and consciously agreed upon social meanings. But it is precisely in the area of these social meanings that a free people are potentially vulnerable when the traditional news processes are consumed by the need to entertain. Entertainment quickly sees the advantage of external regimentation and control and so it seeks ways of implanting needs in the audience which it can then predictably satisfy. But as risk is decreased so is the viewer's interpretive autonomy.

Television is packed with information; more flashes by in a week than one could ever hope to process *critically* in a lifetime. The critical function which makes the democratic way of life possible is under attack. When things are examined critically, people remain in charge. Yet despite all its participation gimmickry, the real content of television and thus of television "news" is feeling, not thinking. Thus television executives conspire to keep the audience properly stroked on a *daily* basis. They are in the business of enchaining minds, not engaging them. The values of print news as opposed to image news parallel the difference between the values of individual responsibility and the values of mass subjugation. Concensus of feeling is the key to the entertainment approach to the news. Keep the images, however, disturbing, flowing past the viewer: never provide time for reflection. Reflection might cause the viewer to assume real ownership over the images, transform them into their proper meanings, and in turn cast them out of his mind. But as long as the viewer is dependent, he moves in trancelike servitude to those who would control the culture.

Of course, as news has become indistinguishable from entertainment, there has been a stepped-up campaign of respectability on its behalf. The less television news works as traditional news, the more insistent is the line that a station's news team is honest, accurate, comprehensive, and totally professional. All this powerful array of talent is merely caught in the wheels of a technology serving an invisible system of social meanings that support collective values and the impotency of the individual.

The problem finally is that television is not to be reformed, for that is beyond its very nature. We may, of course, applaud the rise of families apparently switching their televisions off and this may indeed be one way of dealing with the arrogance of television news—let them fight ever more fiercely for a declining audience. It would be naive to expect a vast reduction of programming overtly labeled "news"; if anything is happening, the reverse is true. When *all* entertainment is news, and vice versa, then we need no longer worry about the existence of our own experience, or is that when we will finally begin worrying but it will be too late? □

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The Flight of Kiwis

Paul C. Nagel: *Descent from Glory: Four Generations of the John Adams Family;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Clyde Wilson

John Adams was descended from a long line of Puritan yeomanry who were among the earliest settlers of Massachusetts. Though his father never achieved anything more than a modest local distinction, John Adams became a key figure in the revolution in New England, leading member of the First and Second Continental Congresses, political philosopher, diplomat, Vice-President, and President. But his greatest accomplishment was his marriage to Abigail Smith, the most remarkable woman in American history, who added Anglican gentry, including the distinguished Quincy line, to the family stock. Of the four children of this remarkable couple who reached maturity, only one achieved distinction. John Quincy Adams recapitulated his father's success as a scholar, legislator, diplomat, Secretary of State, and President. But John Quincy's two brothers, Charles and Thomas Boylston, died young from alcoholism. His sister, Abigail, married William Stephens Smith, one of the most irresponsible and unscrupulous promoters of the day. Smith had all of Aaron Burr's profligacy and ambition, without Burr's charm and courage. He died owing vast sums and left his family destitute.

John Quincy Adams repeated the family pattern in more than his successes. His marriage was the luckiest aspect of his career. His wife was Louisa Johnson, daughter of a Southern family and the most attractive of all the Adamses. Louisa shrunk under the puritanical conceit and censoriousness of her husband—which was directed equally at himself, his family, and the world—but she never completely withered away. Though she wasn't to achieve the exemplary republican matronliness of Abigail, her kindness and liveliness were responsible for whatever was attractive in the later generations of Adamses. As is usually the case, the women made up the better part of the family.

Of the three sons of John Quincy and Louisa, John, Jr. died young after failing miserably in business and George Washington was a suicide before age 30, after what was referred to in the 19th century as a career of debauchery. Again, one son redeemed the line. Charles Francis vindicated the high opinion the Adamses held of themselves by his achievements as a congressman and scholar and as the chief architect of Northern diplomatic success in Europe during the Civil War. Of his seven children, four sons are noteworthy: the historians Henry and Brooks; John Quincy, a gentleman farmer who felt only weakly and intermittently the impulse to thrust himself before the public; and Charles Francis, Jr., the only one of the family who saw military service in the Civil War or who took any active part in the postwar building of the American economy.

Paul C. Nagel, in *Descent from Glory,* presents the sad story of the Adams family as a family, from the inside. He narrates with clarity and shows a deft mastery of the immense Adams documentation, certainly the largest of any American family (though, despite the vastness of the record, there are strategic lacunae in regard to each of the black sheep). He approaches the subject in a spirit of sympathetic candor rather than of muckraking, and he significantly adds to our awareness of the 19th-century America that lay beneath political rhetoric.

What strikes us most deeply in this sad account is the old, old lesson of the vanity of human ambition and the inevitable doom of all dreams of dynasty-building in a republic. What a price the Adamses paid for the ambition that flowed only too naturally from their talents and for those secularized remnants of their Calvinist conscience which left them, in the final analysis, unable to love themselves and even unable to love Creation except on their own unattainable terms! How much happier they would have been had they been able to confine themselves to the family circle and devote their talents to practical, local beneficence or to the vindication of American intellect!

In this admirable study, Nagel does not seek to draw sweeping lessons. He is content to show how the warring devils of ambition and conscience wreaked havoc time and again on those members of the family who were unable or unwilling to adapt to so relentless a view of life. A Puritan conscience can only avoid disaster if it is chastened by practical application or when it is balanced, as it was in the Founders and in the best of English statesmen, by a Cavalier magnanimity and sense of proportion.

Taking the Adamses as exemplary of the New England "aristocracy," history affords few examples of so swift and uncontested a decline. For the first half of the 19th century the heirs of New England and Southern Founders engaged in mortal combat to control the destiny of America. New Englanders devoted themselves with Puritan zeal to the destruction of the Cavalier side of the English inheritance, the Southern gentry, the annihilation of whom was to them the sine qua non of national progress. When the contest was over, New England had an immense share of the political and economic power of America and a near-total monopoly of the cultural power. Yet the fourth generation of Adamses, despite all their advantages and responsibilities,

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fastidiously picked up their skirts and retired to carp that things had not turned out as they expected. Henry and Brooks spent their talents blaming their own and their country's degradation on Southerners, Jews, the predetermined forces of history, uncouth new men like Grant (who were but the natural outcome of their own vision)—on everything except themselves. By contrast, the Southerners staked all on their vision, lost, and retired from the field chastened but with their honor intact.

The self-emasculation of the Adamses in the fourth generation was the real descent from glory. New England fell swiftly from overwhelming predominance into genteel irrelevance or arrogant nullity. To the extent that the Puritan ideal of America was preserved, it was preserved by simple, clearheaded Midwesterners, sprung of common or immigrant stock, who went to work to redeem the American dream and to preserve the American sense of decency. To the extent that that decency was preserved, it was largely extrapolitical. Politics was accepted as a degraded sphere, tolerable only because it was unimportant. The great dream of republican ethics and virtue that had inspired the Founders was dead, never to be resurrected. This descent from glory was more than the tragedy of one family. It was an American tragedy, the echoes of which still reverberate down the long hall of history. □

Labyrinthine Puzzles

Jerold S. Auerbach: *Justice Without Law?;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Eugene B. Goodman: *All the Justice I Could Afford;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego, CA.

Leo Janos: *Crime of Passion;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

James B. Stewart: *The Partners;* Simon and Schuster; New York.

by T. Mark Kulish

"It is at the bar and the bench," proclaimed Alexis de Tocqueville, "that the American aristocracy is found." Since his theme was the absence of aristocracy in America, Tocqueville could not leave such an extraordinary statement unexplained. The lawyer, Tocqueville acknowledged, was aristocratic only in certain respects. His specialized vocation conferred upon him a strong sense of professional solidarity with his peers, and a deeply ingrained habit of orderly thinking. In other respects, he was a creature and beneficiary of the ethos of individual self-interest found throughout the democratic society. Because no firm social latticework remained after the decline of an aristocratic order, serious disputes among individuals with no enduring and definable social ties to each other had to be fought out and settled in a neutral and impersonal arena in accordance with venerable and authoritative rules and procedures.

The striving of persons (and, in time, of corporations posing as juridical persons) for that equal justice under the law, which the free democratic order held before them as its great promise, left lawyers in the position of expediters of democratic social life. Their skill in performing the tasks implicit in that mandate have often been admirable and at times even breathtaking. Yet as the legal profession expended its energies in more and more grandiose and idiosyncratic ways, its aristocratic qualities were steadily drained of substance. As the fierce representation of clients' interests became more obvious, the service of justice became less apparent. The tracing of procedure and precedent turned into a labyrinth, so that familiarity with the baffling passageways was essential for survival in a harsh struggle of wits and wills.

Eventually, the sacredly held (though fundamentally secular) ideal of equal justice for all was discovered to be elusive, diffuse, and often profoundly unsatisfying when it was judicially attained or vindicated. However noble this ideal might be in itself, its grim pursuit often engenders, or causes to further proliferate, a dreadful pettiness of spirit. Thus, as was implicit in Tocqueville's description of its ambivalent character, the legal aristocracy was unable to fulfill the highest mission of an aristocracy as Tocqueville envisioned it: to lend greatness of purpose to the activity of society as a whole while leaving its members free and creative. From this unsavory state of affairs there seems no clear avenue of escape. Laboriously contrived means of attaining justice other than through a legal system have proven equally legalistic, even if nonlegal in name, and equally conducive to a narrowing of aspirations—in short, to mediocrity.

Mr. Stewart's *The Partners* is a lucid description of the upper reaches of the legal aristocracy as it exists today. As he recounts eight instances of how various elite American law firms have responded to the challenge of a particular case or problem, Mr. Stewart forgoes broad conclusions. Still, one discerns throughout an unabashed reverence for the ideal of the attorney-aristocrat, the grand expediter of irreproachable professional integrity. The ideal is imperiled, however, for it is clear that Mr. Stewart also harbors an uneasy skepticism of the appropriateness of the character and scope of the activities of such firms.

Mr. Stewart's accounts of such endeavors as the negotiation of the terms under which the frozen assets of Iran would be released in exchange for the freeing of the American hostages, of the

Mr. Kulish writes from Denver, CO.

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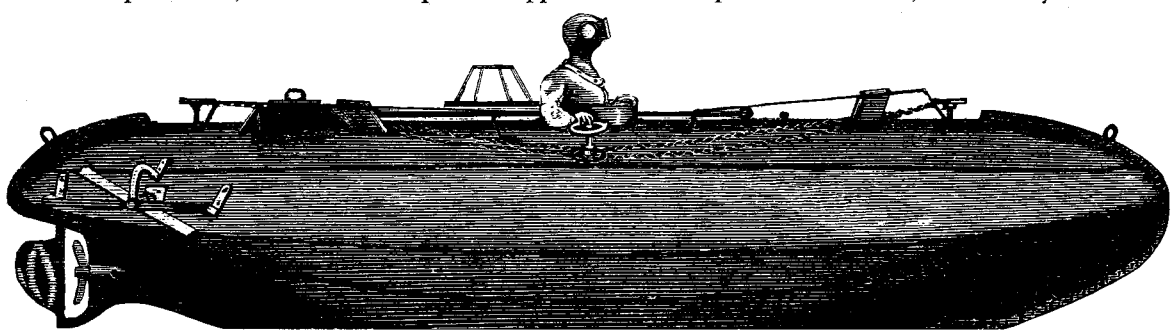
protection of the sinking Chrysler Corporation from the onslaught of creditors as it attempted to satisfy the requirements of its Federally guaranteed loans, of the defense of IBM against the Federal government's 13-year antitrust suit, and of the implementation of Nelson Rockefeller's problematic last will and testament, cannot fail to inspire interest, admiration, and perhaps even awe. Yet in facilitating the resolution of such disputes, these blue-chip attorneys demonstrate little more than their efficacy as senior engineers overseeing the operation of the capitalist, democratic dynamo. To members of society at large, these elite lawyers are (partly by their own deliberate intention) distant and all but unknown, a mere shadow of an aristocracy, attracting no firm loyalties or intense commitments, holding to no vision or inspiration apart from the resourcefulness with which they defend the particular interests of their gargantuan clients. Even their aristocratic manner and temperament are eclipsed, and their professional solidarity belied, by the intense bitterness arising from litigation for high stakes. Procedure and precedent, those supposed bulwarks of rectitude and authority, become finely exploited instruments of war. The solemn vocation of the pursuit of justice within a venerable tradition is obscured by the Byzantine imperative of expediency; it becomes a brutal contest waged according to complex rules. Mr. Stewart's narrative makes it clear that the most astute of these attorneys are cognizant of the contradiction between the duties they must perform and the stature of their profession, and that they ultimately find themselves unable to reconcile the two.

This is not to say that the straightforward pursuit of equal justice under the law by the solitary citizen will always be free of moral paradox or ignobility. Mr. Goodman's account of his lawsuit against the Heublein Corporation for its practice of age discrimination is a striking demonstration of how easily the aspiration for legal justice can degenerate into selfish small-mindedness cloaked in righteousness. Even as he used the legal system to defend himself against injustice (the use of age as an overriding criterion in upper-level promotion), Mr. Goodman deprecated that system unceasingly, yearning for the simpler methods of Solomon. He endured some of the system's most apparent, yet fundamentally unavoidable, deficiencies: the court's preoccupation with procedural and statutory technicalities, and the consequent advantage given to the litigant with more money to spend on skilled attorneys. He found solace in one of the system's most salient virtues: the right to a trial by a jury of laymen unafflicted by extensive legal training.

Yet vindication by the jury and later before an appellate court (before which Mr. Goodman was compelled by a lack of funds to argue for himself) did not satisfy his yearning for justice. Only if the considerable sum awarded by the jury were adjusted for the effects of the inflation of the late 1970's, Goodman believed, would the wrong inflicted upon him be fully rectified. His failure to win this point on appeal left him "stupefied." "I then ceased," he recalled, "to be a True Believer in the legal system. It was the final blow, after six years of pummeling and struggle in the courts." Goodman the litigant regards the system of litigation with contempt. Mr. Goodman has written a morality play in which a virtuous man is wronged and, in the course of his arduous struggle for justice, must struggle to retain his faith in the American legal system. Ceasing to be a "True Believer," the chastened Goodman becomes not a cynic, but a skeptic with diminished and tentative hopes. That the character of his faith should ultimately depend not on the just settlement of the fundamental issue, but on the resolution of a derivative matter, is an indication of how the system of litigation can produce a dismaying mediocrity of spirit.

If justice proves elusive and unsatisfying when pursued by litigation, might one attain it pure and unsullied by some nonlegalistic means? Psychiatry is sometimes considered to be one such alternative. Yet the very fact that the legal system explicitly recognizes psychiatry as a nonlegal means of effecting justice renders psychiatry more an adjunct of the legal system than an alternative to it. So much is clear from Mr. Janos's description of the role of psychiatry in the case of a teenager who killed the remnants of his broken family while under the influence of LSD. The young man was found innocent by reason of his insanity at the time of the deed. The law thus recognizes limits on its own authority beyond which only psychiatry can effect a just outcome. In fact, the insanity verdict imposes a



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prolonged, if not a life, sentence on a person still widely thought of as a dangerous criminal. The sentence is, in effect, one of incarceration, not of treatment. In this instance, however, the sham of the mental-illness treatment facility was exposed, and the ensuing scandal permitted the young man to seek genuine psychiatric help. Psychiatry, briefly out from under the looming shadow of the criminal justice system, is given an opportunity to prove itself as a true alternative. What is proved, however, is only the inherent defects of psychiatry, flaws that permitted its exploitation as a thinly disguised jail warden. For upon this young man, psychiatry bestowed not a grace that heals the wounds of the spirit, not a redemption whose heroism is commensurate with the horror of his deed, but only therapy: therapy that will enable him to limp forward through young manhood into middle age, destined ultimately (in the closing words of the book) "to resemble the rest of us." This is a democratic apotheosis indeed, consistent with the author's persistent fear of judging his subject as a responsible and free human being, rather than as a mere victim of wider circumstances. If this is the sublime justice the law cannot give, then our condition is sorry indeed.

Despair is not in order, however, until other alternatives to law as a means of attaining justice have been explored. This is the purpose of Professor Auerbach's succinct treatise. Auerbach accepts the Tocquevillean premise that the energies of a democratic society tend to find expression in the myriad and diffuse activities of a mass of self-interested individuals. He agrees that the proliferation of litigation arising from this condition so dilutes the ideal of justice that it is often deprived of any meaning other than the settlement of clashing interests: "Justice becomes a compromise that gives the least offense to most people." Echoing Goodman's yearning for the distant age of Solomon, Auerbach laments the disintegration of the early colonial communities of New England. Distinguished by the subordination of individual interests to the greater good of a social organism animated by intense religious fervor, the familial method of resolving disputes in these settlements constitutes, for Auerbach, the most convincing and palpable alternative to the system of law in America's historical experience. The other alternatives he examines—from the institutions of arbitration established among immigrant communities and in the postbellum South to the numerous community arbitration panels established in our own day in response to the approaching paralysis of the overburdened court system—tend, like psychiatry, to collapse into mere appendages of the legal system. Thus, having rummaged through American history in search of ways of effecting justice which might still leave justice exalted, Professor Auerbach, overawed by the progress of secularism and of the non-communal, democratic, individualistic social order, concludes his quest in despair, invoking Kafka's poetic recognition of the futility of seeking justice before the law. □

Misunderstanding Criticism

Cleanth Brooks: *William Faulkner: First Encounters;* Yale University Press; New Haven, CT.

***The Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews by Flannery O'Connor;* Edited by Carter W. Martin; University of Georgia Press; Athens.**

by Marion Montgomery

At some point in one's encounter with the imposing work of William Faulkner, one will want to read Cleanth Brooks's larger studies, *The Yoknapatawpha Country* and *Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond.* But the general reader should start with *First Encounters,* a prologue written after Mr. Brooks made the long journey and returned to share it, generously and considerately. One starts here not simply to learn how to read Faulkner's great work; the deeper lesson is how to move beyond Yoknapatawpha, to understand the relation between life and art. Mr. Brooks, who has been called "the best critic of our best novelist," knows that literature provides a resonant ground for those serious social pleasures through which we pay homage to the community of man, to our strengths and weaknesses, individually and in concert. The end of such a social encounter is not simply knowledge but understanding. Reading this "little book" (as Mr. Brooks calls it) is like listening to good conversation about life itself between a great artist and his best reader. It is to learn what it means to be civilized—and well-mannered, for Mr. Brooks includes the reader in the colloquy as equal to the serious pleasures.

By such tribute to Mr. Brooks, I suggest that he is very much "Southern," but I intend "Southernness" as a much more inclusive term than the provincial understanding of it when it is applied with pejorative undertones. There is an important point at stake, given the growing tendency among students of American criticism to misunderstand Mr. Brooks as "New Critic." Mr. Brooks's "Southernness" is of more ancient lineage than a superficial anchor in geography, politics, or history (though he is more than superficially anchored in the historical South); thus, his conversation has an added dimension as it touches upon the fabric of Faulkner's own "Southernness." Mr. Brooks understands that one must make discoveries about "Southernness" for oneself, out of one's own experiences as

Professor Montgomery's most recent book is Why Poe Drank Liquor, *published by Sherwood Sugden.*

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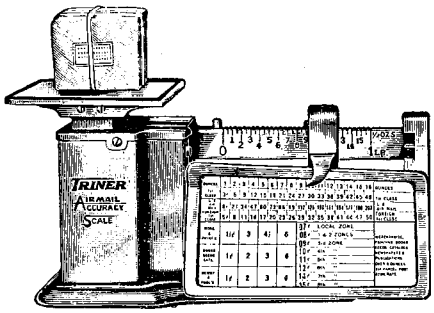
aided and abetted by the witness of one's forefathers—in this instance Mr. Brooks himself talking about theme, character, plot in selected stories and novels of a great novelist. It is our good fortune (and Faulkner's) that Mr. Brooks is himself Southern; he knows firsthand the language and customs Faulkner draws upon and often assumes common to his reader. Given the inevitable lapse from old ways and words, Mr. Brooks can provide a continuity that helps us avoid misunderstanding. *First Encounters* is in a significant way a companion to that "New Critic" text that revolutionized the teaching of literature in the academy, the famous or (in some quarters) notorious Brooks and Warren *Understanding Poetry* (1938).

How refreshing are Mr. Brooks's delight in *The Hamlet* and his eagerness to share its rich fullness, while being considerate of the reader's rights of discovery. It is as if Mr. Brooks has practiced his art for a long time to be prepared to render homage, not only to a great artist, but to our shared life. That ordinate homage is a gift to us. Alas, this book is of a kind made almost impossible by modern academic concerns for civilization which require the habit of a detachment from existence, a detachment which is called "objectivity" but which most often can provide only sterile abstractions of art or life suited to the mechanics of publication, lest the scholar perish in the academic marketplace. (If we were wise in our concern for civilization we might discourage young scholars from publishing books. To publish out of one's gifts rather than as a necessity dictated by a job description might produce at last such wise works as this, in which one has a civilized host serving our mutual humanity to its good health.)

Mr. Brooks as "New Critic"—and indeed that whole amorphous movement—appears to be, increasingly, misunderstood and blamed for a range of ills from the "deconstructionist" fad to the deaths of poets like John Berryman and Robert Lowell. New Critic porridge can be deadly, of course, depending upon the partakers. The "Southern" members of that movement, however, are too often misrepresented by some who properly



lament literature's turning against itself in deconstructionism or bewail the suicides of gifted poets. I think we may get at the point best by turning to Flannery O'Connor's *The Presence of Grace,* a collection of her brief reviews, contributed for the most part to her diocesan paper, *The Georgia Bulletin.* She is speaking to a more restricted audience than does Mr. Brooks, to Georgia Catholics.

Miss O'Connor's reasons for writing these reviews are interestingly complex. She is concerned with "the generally low level of Catholic taste" for one thing, in art, history, theology. She playfully refers to this work as acts of penance, but there is a serious edge to the play, given her recognition of how ineffective the reviews are likely to be. They do allow her to pursue her interest in Old Testament studies as a dimension of her fictional concern with prophecy; in disciplined descriptions of work by Maritain, Gilson, Voegelin, and others, she confirms her understanding of art and history. For those who savor the compact incisiveness of Miss O'Connor's writings, this collection is a pleasure.

She castigates a new novel as "fictionalized apologetics" which "introduces a depressing new category: light Catholic summer reading." She observes elsewhere "the clerical gift for bringing forth the sonorous familiar phrase of slowly deadening effect." Zen, she observes, since it is "non-conceptual, non-purposive, and non-historical," is therefore "admirably suited to be exploited by the non-thinker and pseudo-artist." She advises her local audience that Caroline Gordon's *How to Read a Novel,* "along with Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism,* should be studied by any Catholic group making public pronouncements about literature." In reviewing a novel by Julian Green, she laments that "Spokesmen for the deliver-us-from-gloom school of Catholic criticism have found that this novel commits the unpardonable sin: it is depressing." She, to the contrary, declares it written "with great deftness and delicacy and with a moral awareness that comes only with long contemplation on the nature of charity . . . . it offers no solutions by the author in the name of God," being "completely lacking in false piety." Above all, she warns her Southern Catholic audience to protect itself against the "assumption that there is a brand of criticism special to Catholics rather than that any good criticism will reflect a Catholic view of reality."

The collection, being the work of a gifted and devoted observer of humanity, is both a delight on its own merits and a rich mine for those students burdened by term papers and theses, though she would most likely regret such necessities. Her interest in Hazel Motes of *Wise Blood* or young Tarwater in *The Violent Bear It Away* is reflected in her remarks on grace, especially her concern for distinctions between Catholic and Protestant understandings. One discovers also additional evidence of her own indebtedness to the New Criticism, her uses of which make interesting juxtaposition to that of her contemporaries like Berryman and Lowell. In a generally perceptive essay in *The American Poetry Review* (May/June 1983), Marjorie Perloff examines those *"Poètes Maudits* of the Genteel Tradition," finding them poisoned by the "brooksandwarren" (Lowell's word) approach to poetry. She finds

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these middle-aged waifs inheriting from Modernists a principle "codified by the New Criticism, . . . the rigid separation of *art* from *life*." "If Lowell hadn't existed, surely the New Criticism would have had to invent him." Of Lowell, who turned the personal to poetry regardless of its violations of persons, Miss Perloff mimics his self-justification: "For wasn't poetry, as Ransom and Tate had taught him, wholly unrelated to life?" Well, no. It is one thing for Lowell to have misunderstood; it makes him a pathetic figure in his own poetry. But it is a serious critical error not to distinguish the wayward student from his teachers. Certainly Ransom, Tate, Warren, and Brooks teach no such thing. (One should read Tate's essay contemporary to his influence on these displaced poets, "The New Provincialism," to begin the distinction.) What is taught, at least by the "Southern" members of the New Criticism, is not that art is unrelated to life but that it is one aspect of human life. This lesson was unlearned and thus illustrated by the pathetic confusion in the lives of Lowell, Berryman, Blackmur, Schwartz, and their kindred. It is worth reflecting then that Flannery O'Connor and these poets share the same teachers but come to very different understandings about art's relation to life. The fault Miss Perloff lays at the teachers' door is in the poets, as may be briefly demonstrated by looking at the "Letter to Teachers" preface Brooks and Warren supply to that most influential New Critic book, *Understanding Poetry.*

In the "Letter" the argument is that if poetry is to be studied as literature, "one must grasp the poem as a literary construct before it can offer any real illumination as a document." It must be read as human artifact before one can with any safety see its proper correspondences as a document to life. Thus the three principles of the anthology:

1. Emphasis should be kept on the poem as poem.
2. The treatment should be concrete and inductive.
3. A poem should always be treated as an organic system of relationships, and the poetic quality should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation.

The letter closes by quoting with approval Louis Cazamian: "More important [to the student of literature as opposed to historian], and much more fruitful than the problems of origins and development, are those of content and significance. What is the human matter, what the artistic value of the work?" These matters, of course, grew out of history no less than from immediate human experiences, in recognition of which one may not overlook such poems in this revolutionary text as Donald Davidson's "Lee in the Mountains" and Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead." Whatever its origins—immediate or remote in experience—art is not here separated from life. And the celebrated concern with paradox by these critics in their text is one manner of homage to the mystery of life, lest the work of art be reduced to a "document" whereby life itself is reduced.

That our latest generation of lost poets misunderstood their teachers on this point is rather conspicuously documented by their lives. Indeed, their common problem is a failure to separate life from art in significant ways. Remembering Santayana on the question, we may say with Miss Perloff that they are the last sons of the Genteel Tradition. Removed from the larger mysteries of life, they reduce both art and life to the circumference of the personal, excluding in subtle ways other persons. Increasingly, they are unable to distinguish their own life from their art. The illusion they suffer, which gives them a limited energy, is of the vortex, with art overflowing from the personal. The reality they suffer, however, is that of the maelstrom, with the ego self-consumed. There is a religious intensity of testimony in them, but it is the crying out of lost souls in the desert and prophecy only indirectly. Their work has the force of entropy. Freud, their priest, combines with the New England Puritanism in them as they attempt to rationalize their predicament, giving them a sense of doom which becomes too often a wailing self-justification.

Flannery O'Connor, to the contrary, sees in the New Criticism a rediscovering of artistic principles articulated by St. Thomas; confirmation she finds in Gilson and Maritain, particularly in Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism.* She finds it also in that very "Southern" writer Caroline Gordon in *How to Read a Novel.* These recovered principles are conspicuously present in Mr. Brooks's book. (In her letters to would-be writers, Miss O'Connor repeatedly recommends Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Fiction,* sending her copy to one correspondent and remarking that it is "full of my juvenile notes.") The heart of this matter is the distinction between man as creator and God as Creator, between man as Artist and God as "artist." If art is not carefully distinguished from life in the light of this distinction, it becomes inevitable that the poet confuse himself with God. Since he cannot create ex nihilo, he can but feed upon himself.

The consequence of such confusion is our general decline into the new gnosticism about which Eric Voegelin (one of Miss O'Connor's authors) warns us. For man's assumption of himself as the god of being touches not only poets but scholars and politicians and theologians as well. The consequence of the error in the poet is that pathetic self-consumption toward nothingness reflected in sad, wayward poets like Lowell and Berryman. They may survive more as epitaphs of the age than as abiding poets; that they recognize this likelihood is repeatedly revealed in their lives and letters, but nowhere more conspicuously than by the sardonic (not tragic) irony of their poetry. That sort of sad failure is why it is important to value art as praised and practiced by Cleanth Brooks and Flannery O'Connor. □

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COMMENDABLES

The Name Game

Jack Matthews: *Sassafras;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

There are certain figures, both real and fictional, whose names seem directly related to one descriptive word or phrase. Vincent Price, after decades of playing the most despicable of villains, has come to personify "evil." Huck Finn means "mischievousness" and "boyhood." And John Wayne, of course, evokes "grit."

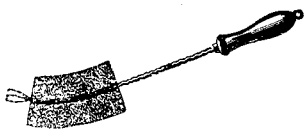
Jack Matthews uses a word to describe his protagonist: Sassafras. Not to be confused with the North American tree whose dried roots produce an aromatic tea, Matthews' sassafras conveys the characteristics of young Thaddeus Burke, a product of the American frontier in the 1840's. Thad was full of "sass": argumentative, bull-headed, never able to see "the right side of things, no matter how hard they were explained." The boy became Professor Thaddeus Burke, Phrenologist. Unable to accept responsibility for any misfortune that might befall him or any trouble he might cause to others, he excused any situation away as being caused by his self-diagnosed "Tendency toward Coincidence." "I attract coincidence as the lofty oak attracts lightning," he explains. This is not to suggest that Burke was fraudulent in either his actions or his motives. He apprenticed under the "master" phrenologist of his time, learned well, and truly believed in his vocation. It is fairer to say that while his motives may have been misguided, they were, nonetheless, sincere. He is, however, hardly a pillar of society. His attitudes and acts include a passion for large quantities of whiskey, the killing of three men, plotting revenge toward another, and cavorting with a prostitute; he flouts not only his Quaker background but any slightly demanding standard set by society. The author calls this *sassafras;* most would see it differently, yet without these flaws of character Thaddeus Burke would cease to exist, which is Mr. Matthews' literary accomplishment—of sorts. (KW) □

Working-Class Wisdom

Eric Hoffer: *Truth Imagined;* Harper & Row; New York.

Intellectuals crusading for revolutionary change typically issue their lofty pronouncements in the name of "the people," more specifically "the working class" or "the proletariat." Because few of those whom they claim to represent ever publicly articulate their own feelings, this claim often goes unchallenged. But as an author who spent ten years as a migrant worker and 25 years as a longshoreman, Eric Hoffer was a working man who spoke for himself and in so speaking punctured the pretensions of many political theorists. Indeed, such theorists would prefer to bind and gag proletarian writers rather than let them publish the kind of iconoclastic perceptions found in *Truth Imagined,* posthumously published memoirs of Hoffer's life up to World War II.

Instead of brooding in bitter alienation over the perfidious values of capitalist America, Hoffer proudly affirms the unique preciousness of the freedoms found in America and asserts that money and profit-making are indispensable safe-



guards for those freedoms. Instead of indulging in querulous complaints about the working man's lot and shrill demands for socialist reform, he refreshingly notes how "singularly free of self-pity" Americans were before FDR and dismisses the doctrine that "common people are more ready to share" than aristocrats as a "sentimental notion." Certainly, this blue-collar philosopher felt no sympathy for communism, arguing that because the Russian Revolution was a defeat for "history made by common people" it was "easier for a common man to achieve high office in czarist than in Lenin's Russia."

Ideologues typically dismiss Scripture as irrelevant to modern concerns, but Hoffer's opposition to their dogmas is particularly effective because even as an unrepentant skeptic he intensively studied the Old Testament as a priceless prose model of honest but pungent simplicity, of expansive creative and moral reach, of "truth imagined." Though not accepting religion's salvific or revelatory dimensions, Hoffer thus gleaned enough from its prophets to demonstrate persuasively what class of people is sky-high on opiates. □

IN FOCUS

Criminal Matters

Lewis S. Feuer: *The Case of the Revolutionist's Daughter: Sherlock Holmes Meets Karl Marx;* Prometheus Books; Buffalo, NY.

As readers of the Canon know, the only place that the name "Marx" appears in the collected works of John H. Watson, M.D., is in the story "Wisteria Lodge," wherein it designates the proprietor of a clothier's. Given the fact that Sherlock Holmes moved through the streets of London when Karl Marx resided in that city, Lewis S. Feuer (the author of *Marx and the Intellectuals* and other books) decided to have the consulting detective take on a case, presented by Engels, for Marx. Feuer's scholarship is impressive when the subject is Marx or the radical movement of the late 19th century. He shows the man to be a pompous hypocrite and most of the so-called revolutionaries to be nothing more than criminals—and it is a rare stroke of light when Feuer has Holmes claim that Professor Moriarty set out on his life of crime after he synthesized "the ideas of a Russian anarchist communist, Michael Bakunin, with those of Marx." Moriarty is said to have written "Crime in the Twentieth Century," which Holmes describes as "the first Marxist article on crime that I

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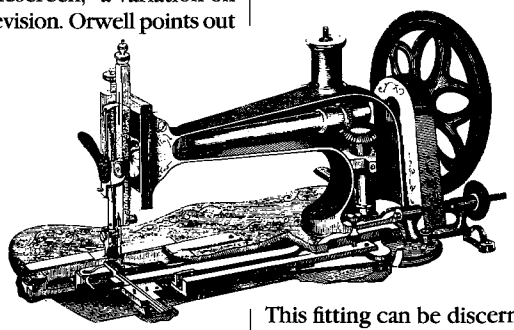
have ever read." We have always known that Moriarty was an intelligent louse; this aspect helps describe why he is so. While Feuer's instincts are right, and while he does impart a good deal of information about the period, he just isn't up to retelling one of Holmes's adventures. Or perhaps Dr. Watson was having a bad day. □

Neoned Sound

Charles Olson: *The Maximus Poems;* Edited by George F. Butterick; University of California Press; Berkeley.

Contemporary society desires contraction. That is, there seems to be an objective at large that maintains that things should be reduced in scope. Movies were once always at least two hours in length, and double features were the rule; now an hour-and-a-half is the average and a double bill is freakish. Large newspapers used to see themselves as documentary records and so were obliged to print the full texts of things like presidential addresses; now they offer easy-to-swallow capsule summaries. Most television shows are 30 minutes long in the listings; they are much shorter when the ad time is figured. From a technological standpoint it would seem that these media would be more expansive now than they were a quarter century ago, thanks to superior camera equipment and filmstock, word processors and computer-controlled typesetting equipment, videotape and a proliferation of available channels.

Earlier this year, a great deal was made out of the fact that it happens to be the title of a book by George Orwell; commentators discussed whether our society was or was not becoming the dystopia envisioned in *1984*. Given the level of discourse, it's doubtful that many of the more vocal took the time out to read the novel. The situation typically presented was centered on "Them" vs. "Us," the former being those with access to things like computers and the latter representing all others, who are somehow beleaguered by the very technological advances that make life in late 20th-century America as easy as it is. One of the key devices described in Orwell's novel—indeed, that which is perhaps the most insidious—is the "telescreen," a variation on the television. Orwell points out



that there is one in every abode and that they cannot be turned off (with the exception of those in the homes of Inner Party members). Today, of course, most households in the U.S. are inhabited by at least one TV set. Developments in the area of cable television make many Big Brotheresque feats *possible* in a number of homes, including monitoring what is on at any given moment. However, what is overlooked by the long-faced and wild-eyed commentators is the fact that people *choose* to spend hours and hours and hours with their sets on; the on-off switches on televisions almost never wear out while channel selectors and tuners fade fast and frequently. Our society seeks diversion, whether in the form of 22-minute sitcoms, seminewspapers, and/or marshmallow-like movies.

One of the consequences of this state of mind is that reading time is contracted to extremely brief periods. The books that tend to be most popular are essentially tabular: diet and exercise books, for example. Other forms of writing have to be very broad: novels by generally popular authors (e.g., Ludlum, Dailey, Asimov) must be virtually without subtlety and complexity since they are read in a series of short sittings. Even authors of what pass as "serious" novels (e.g., Vidal, Mailer, Vonnegut) have molded their texts to fit the fleeting retinal patterns. This fitting can be discerned in the unseriousness of their offerings, the rendering of copious amounts of unnecessary sex and the tendency to resort to similarly crude jokes. The genre to suffer most is poetry. Anything other than the School of Hallmark is all but unknown outside of academic circles. The sonnet length is about the maximum; even the niggardly Poe thought that 86 additional lines would be proper.

Charles Olson ("Who?" many are undoubtedly saying to themselves) was a poet of the long form. *The Maximus Poems* were initiated in 1950 and were completed in 1970, the year of his death. In the University of California edition, the first complete collection in a single volume, the poems are presented on 635 pages that measure 8-1/2 x 11 inches. Some of the pages are fairly empty (the final page reads "my wife my car my color and myself"); some are blank (284 and 285). One can find diagonal patterns, a nearly illegible cursive hand, and a prayer resembling the flourish of Corporal Trim's stick (vide *Tristram Shandy,* volume IX, chapter 4). The pieces have a physical presence. As Sherman Paul put it in *Olson's Push: Black Mountain and Recent American Poetry* (LSU Press; Baton Rouge; 1978), Olson's "major work" was "locating himself and living in a physical world of things"—enduring things, not fleeting images. Pound's *Pisan Cantos* come to mind, but Olson is concerned with this country, not Europe (indeed, Eliot thought that Olson's study of *Moby-Dick, Call Me Ishmael,* was "too American a book"). Olson's poetry is intensely difficult. References abound to such a degree that comprehension suffers; understanding can come in spots only through illumination, for rational means are stymied by the opacity of personal referents. Olson seems to have pushed his work into the academy, his concern with the ordinary man notwithstanding. But perhaps he felt that the academy was the only place in which he would get an extended hearing. As he wrote:

> But that which matters, that which insists, that which will last, that! o my people, where shall you find it, how, where, where shall you listen when all is become billboards, when, all, even silence, is spray-gunned?
>
> when even our birds, my roofs,
> cannot be heard
>
> when even you, when sound itself is neoned in?

When every household resembles the Las Vegas strip, when thinking is done by Commodore VIC 20's and carefully coiffed newscasters, poetry is replaced by a vulgar video palimpsest. *That's* what Orwell worried about. □

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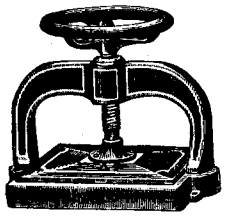
Perceptibles

James Leasor: *Who Killed Sir Harry Oakes?* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

To say that life imitates art is to put too fine a point on things. Consider, for example, the case of Sir Harry Oakes. Oakes, a self-made millionaire who gained his wealth by sinking a gold mine beneath a Canadian lake, was found murdered in his lavish estate on the Bahamas in 1943. The murder was performed in a gruesome and bizarre manner. The prime suspect: his son-in-law, a rake who ran off with the daughter, a playboy who made money by running a chicken farm. Add the Duke of Windsor



(the man who, thanks to Wallis Simpson, would not be king), two dubious cops from Miami, the Mafia, Thomas Dewey, the U.S. Army, and an equally fulsome cast of minor characters. Life in this case is not imitating art, but the lowest sort of pulp fiction. □

* * *

Herbert Schlossberg: *Idols For Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society;* Thomas Nelson; Nashville, TN.

When Jehu, an ancient king of Israel, found his realm sliding into idolatry, he solved the problem summarily: he gathered all the idolaters together in a single building and slaughtered them. Such a decisive course of action, of course, is fortunately not open to any religionists in the pluralistic democracy of 20th-century America. However, as an articulate and widely read Christian scholar, Herbert Schlossberg practices a less bloody and more helpful version of Jehu's tactic: he has assembled the ideas informing all of the regnant idolatries into one book, where he annihilates them as mercilessly as Jehu did the priests of Baal, and with sharper weapons. Mr. Schlossberg compellingly demonstrates that Western civilization rests upon Judeo-Christian underpinnings and that, by weakening that foundation, the idolatries of modernity inevitably drop society into anarchy, barbarism, and totalitarianism. Hence, even those who do not share Mr. Schlossberg's hopes for the next world have reason to laud his defense of the best and most humane in this one. □

WASTE OF MONEY

Dubious Fraternizing

***In Praise of What Persists;* Edited by Stephen Berg;** Harper & Row; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

In Praise of What Persists is a "Wouldn't-it-be-a-good-idea" kind of book. "Wouldn't it be a good idea," says the editor, "to bring together a number of essays about what writers believe has influenced their work." Such books are almost always failures or at the least disappointing; this collection is no exception. It does not bring together essays by "leading" writers as promised, although there are a few prominent writers presented.

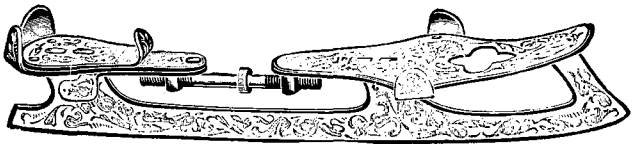
It so happens that 15 of the 24 essays appeared elsewhere, one as long ago as 1972. It is unlikely then to be the case that "most of them agreed to contribute" only when they were encouraged to rethink the subject of influence "in the light of their own experience."

The idea of "influence" as used by Berg in his introduction (the essayists are to "illuminate the question of literary influence") is to be interpreted very broadly. While some writers specify their debt to another or other writers, others "reach back in their experience" to connect the conditions which "have formed their work." In a provocative essay John Hawkes tells of the influence on his work of a cold, dark Atlantic island: "I'm obsessed with the sea and islands, and whereas Donne says that 'no man is an island,' I believe that we're all islands—inaccessible, drifting apart, thirsting to be exploited, magical." Hayden Carruth on the influence of jazz on his poetry is unexpected and very tantalizing. Berg's hope is that those who emphasize non-literary influence will "break new ground at the source." The hope is not justified. Autobiography, biography, and the ubiquitous interview have always provided the materials Berg thinks of as so special. Influence studies, too, have been around for a very long time.

The underlying premise of the collection is uncertain: "I want the author to tell me. Only the person who created what I love will do." I do not wish to raise in detail the whole question of the intentional fallacy here, but it does present a strong case for making one wary of an author's expression of the meaning of his work *outside* the work itself. T. S. Eliot always would refer readers to his poems when they would ask him what they were about. D. H. Lawrence's advice to trust the tale not the teller is still pertinent.

Nevertheless, one essay in this collection is noteworthy, Reynolds Price's "For Ernest Hemingway." It is a loving presentation of Price's growing awareness of Hemingway's "lifelong" subject: "saintliness." Most of Hemingway's work seems

> intended to enhance, even create if necessary, the love of creation in its witnesses and thereby to confirm an approach by the worker toward goodness, literal virtue, the manly performance of the will of God. *Saintliness,* I've called it (*goodness* if you'd rather, though *saintliness* suggests at least the fierce need, its desperation)—a saint being, by one definition, a life which shows God lovable.



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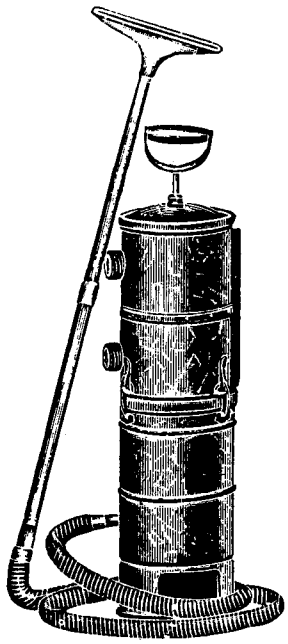
The essay is remarkable in that it was inspired by *Islands in the Stream,* by common consensus one of his poorest works. Intensely moved, then, by the memories of his previous reading of Hemingway, Price took to



heart the lesson of one master: *"Prepare, strip, divest for life that awaits you; learn solitude and work; see how little is lovely but love that."*

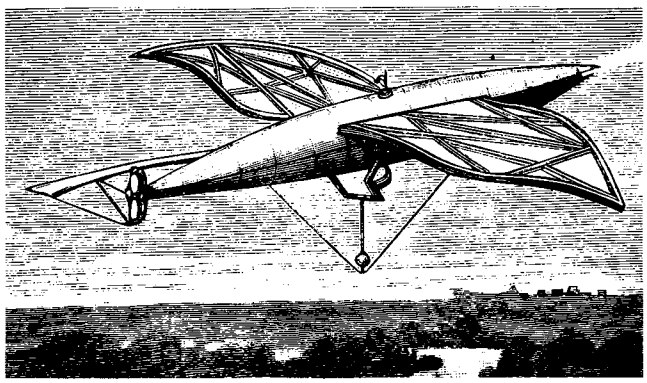
Berg's method as editor more commonly produces pieces like Carolyn Forché's "El Salvador: An Aide-Memoire," the worst essay in the book. Between 1978 and 1980 Forché visited El Salvador a number of times; she writes this essay to explain how politics came to dominate her poetry, or as she would have it, how the poem is more political than politics. She claims that the 20th century demands "a poetry of witness," by which she means that "there is no such thing as nonpolitical poetry." The poet's voice must have authority and this authority comes from an ideologically charged vision. All language is political; hence, she wishes to write a poetry of documentation. The essay is violent, justified, I presume, in the same way that she attempts to justify the rape of poetry by politics. The fundamental premise of the essay has been proved wrong repeatedly, especially by the experience of the American leftist writers of the 1930's. It is still true that those who do not know the past are determined to repeat it. □

Subtle Siren for the Soviets

***Nuclear War in the 1980's?;* Compiled by Christopher Chant and Ian Hogg;** Harper & Row; New York.

While the mark of interrogation in the title is heartening, the illustration on the cover is a cause of more thorough doubt: it shows an ALCM (AGM-86), an air-launched cruise missile, designated as belonging to the U.S. Air Force, that's zooming across a mountain range, presumably Ural-like in nature. While the text purports to present "the very latest facts and theories" about you-know-what "in a clear and unbiased way," there is still the question of that cruise missile. After all, don't the Soviets hate those turbofan-powered crafts more than anything since the neutron bomb? Things become very clear very quickly.

In the 1950's, not only was there a great deal of attention given to the then-new threat of nuclear war, but also to the effects of comic books on youthful minds. One of the consequences of the latter was the advent of "Classic Comics," which retold tales from literature through illustrated pulp. The concerns of the 50's have been parlayed in this text into various scenarios including "Surprise Attack." It goes from 12:00 "Early Warning System detects nuclear attack" to 12:30 "Both nations will suffer devastating casualties and urban destruction" in a mere nine panels. The whole thing amounts to a massive trivialization of a possible catastrophe, but there is a more telling point to it. Whereas the cartoon shows a figure who is obviously Ronald Reagan, there is nowhere a sketch of whomever his Soviet counterpart is. In addition, another two-page spread features a cutaway illustration of the E-4B, "The Flying White House," but no picture of the Politburo's Rats' Nest. The cartoon sequence "Command Under Fire" shows the U.S. president turning tail and flying away. One explanation why this retreat is so one-sided can be found in the text: "Little is known of the Soviet C^3 [command, control, and communication] apparatus." A person must *read* to glean that bit of information, which is always a sensible practice when confronting a book. But it is patently obvious that this book is meant to be *looked at*—given the proliferation of graphs, maps, charts, and drawings all in bright colors—so one who makes a perusal may come away believing in the pacific nature of the Soviets.



One series of charts, "The Superpower Armoury," should be carefully consulted by any of those who are ready to freeze anything other than ice cream. When it comes to warheads and equivalent megatonnage, the U.S.S.R. has the U.S. beat cold. In the late 1960's and through much of the 1970's, Americans were enamored of things Oriental, from fragrances and fabrics to food and fighting techniques. Sandalwood, silk, and shrimp are still with us. Most of the judo studios have become mini porno theaters. However, the concept that properly placed jabs, thrusts, and kicks can devastate punches, slugs, and haymakers remains. Thus, people are lulled into a false sense of security here in the U.S., thinking that our sophisticated technology makes us equal to the brute force of the Soviets. Chuck Norris movies notwithstanding, the fact is that quantity still counts.

Books that claim to be unbiased and which smoothly slip in the knife are the last things needed in this country. A stiff dose of—dare we say?—counter-propaganda is in order. After all, the Soviets aren't building all of those missiles, subs, and bombers and maintaining a giant military machine because they have an overabundance of manufactured consumer goods and like to keep their men employed: there is method there, not merely madness. □

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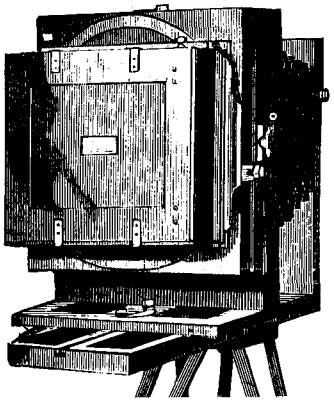
Falling Action

***Vertigo;* Directed by Alfred Hitchcock; Screenplay by Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor; Universal.**

by Stephen Macaulay

Vertigo is the second Hitchcock film disinterred from a film vault for showing in the mid-80's after some 25 years of absence; it, unlike *Rear Window,* might just as well have continued to rest. Near the beginning of the film, Jimmy Stewart, who is playing a commonsensical former police detective in San Francisco, is contacted by an old school chum, a slick shipping magnate who is oppressed by having to run the firm that his wife brought to the marriage. The sharpy tells Stewart that his wife seems to be possessed by a dead person, and that she spends a great deal of time driving around while in that state (unlike, say, the possessed type of the 1970's evident in *The Exorcist,* who spent her time being nauseating). He wants the ex-dick on the trail. Initially, Stewart, in the best Stewartesque fashion (sans the stutter but with the flywheel-like building and rush of words), is repulsed by the idea. He maintains that the woman doesn't need a detective but a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a psychoanalyst, or, darn it, a good family doctor. The 1950's, of course, was the period when the subconscious moved out of the medical journals and into the suburbs; Stewart's reaction is a blow for reality. Then things fall apart.

Virtually all of Hitchcock's films (*The Birds* is an obvious exception) are based on misperceptions: the protagonist, for various reasons, has only part of the data required to come to the correct conclusion. The audience, too, is presented with fragments, and thus works to identify with the protagonist so as to work out the mystery. In the case of *Vertigo,* there is a problem, one with the character of the protagonist. A basic premise is that he has acrophobia, which leads to vertigo. That's acceptable enough; all people have little quirks, whether it's a trust in a rabbit's foot or some other fetish or a fear of black cats or hypodermic needles. But Stewart, during the course of the film, moves into melancholia, catatonia, and, penultimately, necrophilia; his (not the audience's) purgation comes through a bout of sadism. The transformation from a relatively steady state to one wherein



the eyes are portals to oblivion is hardly a laudable one. Moreover, an aberrant individual is not an effective vehicle for moving toward any full or even satisfying conclusion; as he isn't all there, the film can never be fulfilled.

From a formal standpoint, the film is also flawed. Hitchcock normally didn't rely on gimmicks; once again, *The Birds* is an exception. Hitchcock was a very good storyteller; he was able to rely on the plot and the actors to create and to carry along the feeling of suspense. In *Rear Window,* for example, most of the footage is of a character sitting semi-immobilized in a chair, hardly the sort of thing that would seem to appeal to an audience that is semi-immobilized in the theater. Still, the expressions, views, gestures, emotions, and frustrations of the character and the unknown that he considers are enough to transcend the chair and to transfix attention. In *Vertigo* there is a special-effects sequence consisting of animation, gels, and unconventional camera angles, a flashback to a nonexistent time. It is painfully dated, whereas the De Soto that Stewart drives appears merely stylized. Any verisimilitude that has been created before that point is utterly destroyed. There can be little wonder that the infrequently original Mel Brooks seized upon this sequence from *Vertigo* for the centerpiece and even the logo of his 1977 supposed spoof of Hitchcock films, *High Anxiety.* Much of Hitchcock is timeless; *Vertigo* is trivial. □

Nyet—or Nope

***Gorky Park;* Directed by Michael Apted; Screenplay by Dennis Potter; Based on the novel by Martin Cruz Smith; Orion Pictures.**

Why Moscow? That's the question evoked by the cinematic version of *Gorky Park,* which is nothing more than an uninteresting detective story with some strikingly stylized shots of the protagonist that would make the hands of any phrenologist in the audience quiver for an exploratory touch. The medium of film is able to show that the Moscow apartment of the chief investigator of the Soviet People's Militia is substandard even for a penurious American undergraduate, but such clues must be sought within the visual barrage of vapidities. Readers of Martin Cruz Smith's novel will recognize names, and a smidgen of the plot, but wonder what happened to about 400 of the book's 430-odd pages. Certainly, films rarely render justice to their written predecessors, but in this case, much of the gutting is inexplicable by any standards of rudimentary sense. In the novel, for example, the investigator is somewhat sour on the People's State, for personal reasons: his father, a heroic ex-warhorse of World War II, whose ego drove his

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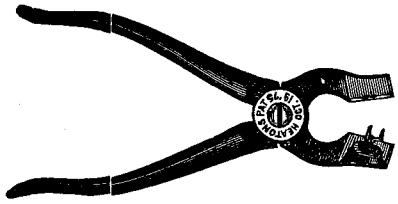
wife to suicide, is always thrown up in Arkady's face as an example of what he *should* have become—if only he was *man enough* to do so; Arkady's wife, who is thoroughly collectivized, will become intimate with him only on a regularly scheduled basis and only for the sake of the Party. Such are enough to make any man bitter. But in the filmed version, Arkady is simply a freewheeling demirebel without a cause, and a bachelor to boot. The character in the novel is an outcast of sorts because he understands his role within the nature of Soviet society—but he also knows what side his bread, occasionally, is buttered on, and he hoards the crumbs. Smith's character, then, is motivated; that created by Apted and Potter is merely an actor in more than the literal sense.

Once, movies were made in exotic settings for the sake of Technicolor: panoramic shots of the real—or convincingly reconstructed—thing. The filmed *Gorky Park* doesn't even have that excuse, as practically the only outdoor shots are of beat-up Ladas (born of Fiats) in inclement weather. Apted might just as well have made a film about Detroit, filmed in Brasilia, called *Belle Isle,* or one about New York, filmed in Toledo, called *Central Park,* or one about Chicago .... Moscow has nothing to do with the movie, and, without its context, it is nothing. (SM) □

Charm & Epoch

Richard Schickel: *Cary Grant: A Celebration;* Little, Brown; Boston.

How does personal charm interact with an epoch? Many explanations come to mind, though not all accessible through words. However, if asked about who may best embody 20th-century Anglo-Saxon masculine charm, many of us—*les enfants du siécle*—will answer: Cary Grant. Somehow Scott Fitzgerald, Wodehouse, and the art of advertising cashmere sweaters all converge in his face, grimace, gaze, gestures, and reactions. If a habitué of sumptuous hotel



lobbies symbolizes someone who is comfortable with himself at our stage of history, Mr. Grant is the epitome.

Mysteries of genetics are impenetrable, and Hollywood—as everybody who lived during this century knows—has proved to be more knowledgeable than Mendel in breeding "superior" strains. This is why Mr. Archie Leach, of mixed Cockney-Jewish origin, ended up in America representing the suavity and easy-going manners of the best-bred British aristos and the wealthiest mainline Wasps. Mags on the order of *People's* sophistication and eloquence call gentlemen who look and behave like Grant "debonair." There is something more to him, at least in our perception, some visual capacity to convey a gracefulness admixtured with autoirony, with a tiny drop of resignation, which, in turn, is a mark of a self-controlling brightness of mind. All those ingredients blend perfectly into a persona that—when watched on screen—looks like a particularly refined cocktail tastes. Mr. Schickel, a penetrating writer on film affairs, somehow misses that point; his text seems a bit like an exercise in typing information and so is without his usually interesting insights. □

MUSIC

Satchmo Swings

James Lincoln Collier: *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Doug Ramsey

Louis Armstrong, in the 1920's, changed music once and for all. Before Armstrong, jazz was interesting, and probably important, folk music. Armstrong, the first great soloist, transformed jazz by dint of his genius. Until now, even the best books about Armstrong have barely risen above the quality of fan magazine evaluations, departing from idolatry only for the obligatory notation that Armstrong's artistry declined after his Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings. Collier identifies Armstrong as "the preeminent musical genius of his era." This major critical biography addresses the subject with the seriousness and thoroughness commanded by a figure of such stature.

Collier is provocative. Without attempting to devaluate the Armstrong legend, he uses sociology and psychology to cut away the myth and to disclose substance. With careful research and a flair for the ambience, he evokes the times and places that helped mold Armstrong—the underbelly of New Orleans in the Teens, the gangland nightside of Chicago in the 20's, Harlem after the jazz mainstream swept east to New York. And he understands the nature of Armstrong's genius:

> He came, in the end, out of himself; and out of that same source came so much more, as if he were a funnel through which twentieth century music had to pass before it could find its way.
>
> There come at moments in history people who gather into themselves threads around them and weave from

Mr. Ramsey is a noted jazz critic who writes from Northbridge, California.

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them a new pattern. Armstrong was one such person.

Collier's musicology, while not as clinically precise as the benchmark chapter on Armstrong in Gunther Schuller's *Early Jazz* (Oxford University Press; New York; 1968), is helpful in reaching enlightenment on the genius of his inventiveness and the workings of his imagination. Collier occasionally creates just the right metaphor to explain an element of Armstrong's music-making process, as in these lines from the author's description of Armstrong's 1924 solo on "Shanghai Shuffle" with the Fletcher Henderson band: "For the first eight bars he plays just one note, repeated some two dozen times. He is not designing cathedrals here, he is driving in tent pegs."

Equally perceptive and accurate musical analyses are found in the chapters devoted to evaluation of Armstrong's recorded work. But Collier's primary contribution to Armstrong scholarship and to a general understanding of the artist and the man comes from his assessment of the effects on a budding genius of family, environment, and society.

Armstrong's personality, open but unaggressive and dependent on powerful father figures, developed in Jane Alley and black Storyville. Those sections were dirty, poor, raw, and libertine in an early 20th-century New Orleans noted for permissiveness and for the abjectness of poverty among its poorest blacks. Pimping, prostitution, beatings, and murder—as well as music—were in the air that the young Armstrong breathed. It was not the sanitized "Glory Alley" of the motion picture in which Armstrong appeared 40 years later. Collier emphasizes this largely unrestrained atmosphere as the background for Armstrong's "open expressiveness" as a performer. His mother was lax but wholly supportive. His father was absent. To compensate, Armstrong found a tough, authoritarian father figure who protected him, made decisions, and provided approval during each stage of his development.

But Armstrong's most significant need was for applause. Collier makes the case that the brilliant trumpeter, virtually the inventor of true jazz improvisation, deteriorated from his peak artistic form of the late 1920's largely because of that need. As a singer and a showman, Armstrong was enormously popular with masses who could not have been less concerned with the purity of his art. Indeed, in a theme Collier develops throughout the book, it is clear that Armstrong thought of himself not as an artist but as an entertainer who played the trumpet, sang, "and did a fair amount of comedy." It never entered his mind that he had sold out to commercialism, as purists maintain to this day, but that he was providing what his audiences demanded—simply doing his job.

The attitude was typical of his generation of jazzmen and of the tradition, until the advent of bebop, of jazz as entertainment. Pianist Earl Hines often said that he considered himself first and foremost an entertainer. This was the Earl Hines who collaborated with Armstrong in the 1920's on recordings that set new artistic standards and transfigured American music. Yet Armstrong and Hines thought of themselves not as keepers of the flame, but as audience pleasers. Contrast their self-assessments with the view two generations later of Charlie Parker, perhaps the only jazz soloist other than Lester Young whose achievements approach Armstrong's:

> Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn. They teach you there's a boundary line to music. But, man, there's no boundary line to art.

Armstrong discovered early in his career that rooms full of people responded eagerly to his singing and clowning. In Collier's words, "the benefit to Armstrong was to be immense, but the loss to jazz was incalculable." The gain to jazz had also been immense, as Collier recognizes, and he speculates for the reader what the music might have become without Armstrong. But he fails to define it, despite a mighty effort incorporating jazz genealogy and deductive reasoning, concluding that:

> In the music of the twentieth century, the presence of Louis Armstrong is simply everywhere, inescapable as the wind, blowing through the front door, seeping in the windows, sliding down the chimney. He is a mountain in the path: you can go over him or around him, but you cannot avoid his effect.

In tracking Armstrong's career from playing for the slow-drag dances of pimps and prostitutes in black Storyville dives, to the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, to the glories of the Hot Fives and the discovery of pure improvisation, Collier carefully melds musical and cultural factors. He recognizes that Armstrong's special musical qualities—"a razor sharp attack, a broad terminal vibrato, a rich tone"—were simply among the means of expressing what Armstrong had developed by 1922, "that *sine qua non* of a great artist, an individual voice." He likens the instantly identifiable character of Armstrong's work to that of Dickens, Faulkner, Titian, and van Gogh. Collier's analogies recall a passage from Fred Robbins's moving

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eulogy at Armstrong's funeral in 1971:

> He was truly the only one of his kind, a titanic figure of his and our time .... a Picasso, a Stravinsky, a Casals, a Louis Armstrong.

Yet, after the early 1930's, this titan took to showboating, highnoting, clowning, and singing to please his wider audience. There were moments of musical brilliance in his final four decades, but his magical presence largely subjugated his protean imagination, his inventiveness, his subtlety. The beauty of Armstrong's tone, which reflected his great soul, could not be diminished, and it frequently carried him through substandard solos. His singing (he literally invented jazz singing) was a part of the "individual voice" that made him a universally loved figure. But by 1934, his development as an innovator was ended. Collier's treatment of Armstrong's decline has the elements of a tragedy, in the classic sense of a basic flaw leading to a character's downfall.

Based on his stringent assessment of Armstrong's work in his final decades, Collier may feel justified in giving summary treatment to the last 20 years of the artist's life. Regardless of the level of artistic achievement, however, it was a period in which Armstrong was a dominant and influential figure in American life and around the world. Music aside, that phenomenon justifies extensive documentation and analysis. But Collier has written an invaluable account and evaluation of Armstrong's life and output up to the 1950's. It is admirable for its sympathetic weighing of Armstrong's achievements and shortcomings against the pressures on a lower-class black man who came out of one of the sink holes of his society. □

ART

Public, Political, & Private

Serge Guilbaut: *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War;* University of Chicago Press; Chicago.

Dore Ashton: *About Rothko;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Last January we noticed an advertisement on a cable television channel for *American Artist* magazine. The announcer said, in a convincing Madison Avenue manner, that the magazine is "committed to realist art." Note that he said *committed,* not merely "devoted to" or "features." Bolstering the no-nonsense pitch is the premium: "a really useful free gift ... a sturdy canvas tote bag." *Useful, sturdy:* this is the language of hammers, screwdrivers, and other hand tools, the sort of thing that Socialist Realist art speaks in posters showing the happy, strong workers busy at their benches. The sponsors of the ad probably don't have *that* in mind. Rather, they are undoubtedly trying to appeal to people to turn back the clock to a time before what Serge Guilbaut calls "the avant-garde's 1947-48 decision to abandon representative painting," to a period when landscapes had trees and cows and such, not blobs of pigment. The people who immediately leapt from their La-Z-Boys to place their magazine orders must think that the advent of abstract expressionism marked the descent of art in America. But Guilbaut argues that the creation of a "style that would avoid the trap of illustration" in America during a period that extends a few years on either side of the duration of World War II was a coup, and that when Clement Greenberg boldly announced in 1948 that the City of Light, once the center of Western culture, couldn't hold a candle to New York (thanks, in large part, to the "sincerity" of New York's Jackson Pollock), the poor, tired French had to accede through default. It was, then, a triumphant victory, not a defeat.

The pack of artists who moved from the strictures of the Popular Front program to a new revolutionary order, Guilbaut claims, put America on the cultural landscape: American artists were derivative rubes no more. Unfortunately, this professor who is attempting to present a "materialist history of the art of the New York school" maintains many of the wonderful works of "alienation" were reintegrated into the sociopolitical fabric by bourgeois department store operators who offered the canvases, popular magazines that recommended the purchase of same for investment purposes, and by, of course, the American government that had the gall to show the works on the international scene as an expression of the freedom available to artists in this country.

Perhaps it's because they feel that they must be at odds with the status quo, or perhaps it's because they have some sort of tunnel vision when they leave the confines of their studios, but a considerable number of modern American artists have been and are partisans of the left. The Spanish Civil War ... the period prior to Hitler's and Stalin's getting into bed ... the McCarthy days ... Vietnam: all of these were stages during which the artists could be *opposed.* Some mark the dropping of the first atomic bomb as the event that somehow debilitated visual artists, cast them into thoroughgoing despair, darkened their vision, caused their role to be trivialized. Yet it's hard to discern any slackening in their commitment to be *against.* For example, the cover story of the January 1984 issue of *Arts Magazine*—which isn't a clarion for "realist art"—concerns an organization named *Artists Call* that, artist Jon

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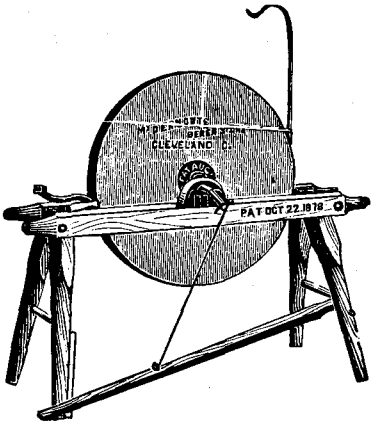
Hendricks says in the story, speaks out "very, very strongly against the inhuman, illegal, barbaric action of the United States government against Nicaragua." Hendricks, who is apparently enamoured of useless flourishes, goes on to exclaim, "What the government is doing there is a very negative thing. It's destructive; it's destroying the possibility of a free culture. The United States government has a very, very bad history, or track record, of suppressing those very freedoms which are now emerging in that country." Hendricks's rhetoric has a cadence and terminology that makes it a contemporary version of that spouted by the artists under Guilbaut's benign gaze, those whose formative years were partially sculpted by the tools of the Popular Front. Almost as if to acknowledge his predecessors, Hendricks mentions that it was a horrible thing that the U.S. government didn't immediately recognize the Soviet government after the 1917 revolution and that, perhaps, the U.S. government was, consequentially, responsible for the suppression of art in the Soviet Union. If Hendricks paints as well as he thinks, he'd better send for a "sturdy canvas tote bag" and learn the basics.

Art critic Dore Ashton, a biographer of Mark Rothko (a man who was as big on polemics during the 40's as he was high on art), makes her contribution to the Latin American issue by stating in the story:

> There are many people who can be moved, people of imagination, and *Artists Call* can gather them together. They can use their imaginations to stimulate the imaginations of others who, alas, very often cannot imagine the death and terror of children in places that are being treated in such a way as we, unfortunately, we Americans, seem to be treating them.

If nothing else, Ashton is imaginative, both about what "we Americans" *seem* to be doing and about Mark Rothko's contributions. If those who uphold representative, or illustrative, art have a tendency to be somewhat crude in their expressions, those who are otherwise directed often suffer from too much



imagination, something that Ashton can't get enough of. For example, about one of the large panels that Rothko painted for the Society of Fellows at Harvard University Ashton writes:

> A fiery orange-red form is suspended like a flaming hoop in purple spaces, an apparition that appears in its own theater with its own transforming inner stage lights. It too is susceptible to time, and as it is contemplated, the low rectangular knot—the plaquette suspended on a horizontal line that is repeated top and bottom in each painting—becomes a glowing coal, with thicker brush marks and vermilion splashes like lambent sparks.

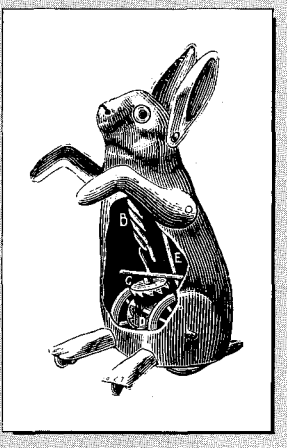
Flaming hoops, theaters, stage lights, coals, sparks: an over-heated imagination.

Rothko, a troubled man who ultimately took his own life, clearly meant to communicate *something* (values, Ashton thinks, but then she happened to be pals with the guy, and he could have slipped the word to her), *possibly* to the viewers of his work. The question about Rothko's message stems in part from the fact that while he was a public artist (i.e., he put his canvases on display), he, during his mature period, aimed at expression through what he construed as private means. In one instance he had a falling out with architect Philip Johnson over what has become known as The Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas,

Fleeting Truths

Katherine Hepburn, the shining icon of feminist mythology and the perfect embodiment of what certainly can be described as the best in the modern emancipation concept and independence syndrome:

> Women today are in a terribly tough position. I'm all for women's liberation. Hell, my mother was one of the first, and I carried a banner for her more than 70 years ago, when I was 4. I wore pants when nobody else did, and I've led a life that might be considered totally emancipated. I also believe women are superior to men in many ways—they have to be, because they have tremendously much more difficult choices to make in life—but I also honestly think they've gone batty today. Women simply are not men, and if we think we are, we're making a big mistake. I think I've trod a more careful trail than women today because I've always recognized that we're so very different emotionally. That's why I said that if I were a man today, I wouldn't marry a woman with a career. I wouldn't be that big a fool. □



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a site for which he painted *Triptych.* Rothko wanted the lighting to be based on the skylight that he had in his New York studio. Johnson thought otherwise, and eventually withdrew from the project. Even Ashton thinks that Johnson's plan was superior to that which was put into place. Lighting wasn't his only concern: Rothko wanted the walls and the floor of the chapel to be like those in his studio. The works, seemingly, could not be lifted from the environment in which they were created without suffering tremendous traumas from the dislocation. Taking these requirements into account, it's almost as if Rothko was merely talking to himself. Perhaps the viewers were, then, meant only to overhear him. Is it art or merely self-indulgence? □

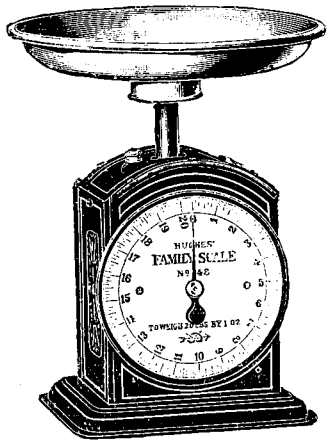
POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Self-Realization

by B. J. Bryant

Anyone who contemplates life in our country today would undoubtedly concede that these are difficult and threatening times, both for individuals and for the nation as a whole. What seems encouraging is that many people are beginning to understand how outward difficulties—too numerous to mention, but all springing from selfishness and hatred—are the inevitable consequences of our inward deficiencies: particularly the loss of the moral compass resulting from not enough love for God. As a result of this realization, people are more inclined to scrutinize their own behavior as they go through the tests and trials of their lives than to simply blame others for the world's problems. If people truly loved God more, they would make ever more devoted efforts to attune their lives and actions with his will: defend his purposes against ideologies hostile or indifferent to him, and rigorously cultivate their own higher natures to please him. As people strive to develop this love for him, they come to be very protective of the values and institutions which allow our country to safeguard it, and develop a deepening sympathy for other countries and religious heritages which are struggling, in their own ways, to do the same. Most importantly, they begin to experience an ever stronger desire for a direct, intimate, intensely personal relationship with God.

This is obviously a very private matter, and every person who sincerely seeks God does so on his own, whether or not



he belongs to one of the world's major religions, or to any other formal religious organization. Each person who is blessed with real faith, or the desire to develop it, knows intuitively that the one who created him is certainly capable of responding to his heart's call in a way that is as unique as he is. Obviously, the uniqueness of one's relationship with God need not be compromised in any way by membership in one of the world's major religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism); neither is affiliation with one of these a sine qua non of the authenticity of the love existing between God and his human son. The lover of God inevitably feels a strong kinship with anyone else who also loves him, and has a natural respect for the formal expression of that love, even if it differs from his own. All that is necessary is that it be sincere, and strong enough to allow the divine hand to work through it to transform one's life.

The foregoing is meant to provide a frame of reference in which to consider the objections that must be raised concerning the remarks about the Self-Realization Fellowship made by Mr. Steven Hayward in *Chronicles of Culture* (December 1983; p. 41). In his article "Self-Actualizing Mammon" Mr. Hayward fastens on the physical appearance of one of the shrines of this organization and, finding said appearance not to his liking, proceeds to draw some rather unfortunate conclusions about the real nature of the organization itself. It is regrettable that he did not try to learn something about Self-Realization Fellowship before condemning it. If he had, he would surely have sensed the depth and singlemindedness of the devotion of its members to God, and to the keeping of his laws here on earth. He would also certainly have appreciated the reasonableness and stability of its teachings, and would thus have felt the kinship that one lover of the spirit feels for another. Instead, he rather smugly tried to hurt this church, and in so doing put himself in the unenviable position of doing violence to what is holy.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Hayward will take the time to become familiar with what the Self-Realization Fellowship is really about. I am certain that after an investigation he will conclude that it is indeed an ally in the cause of righteousness, deserving of his apologies and his respect. □

Mr. Bryant belongs to the Self-Realization Fellowship.

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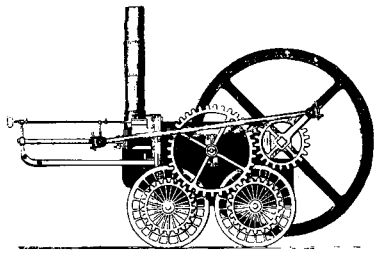
Mr. Hayward Replies:

I should like to apologize to Mr. Bryant if he finds my remarks impertinent or somehow impious. While I appreciate the spirit of Mr. Bryant's reply, there is nevertheless much in what he says with which I must sharply disagree. However, though I did not deliberately intend to offend anyone, I fear that Mr. Bryant is among those who find strong judgments of any sort offensive.

Mr. Bryant writes eloquently of the need to nourish one's inward spiritual journey toward God, giving but one qualification for our love for God: "All that is necessary is that it be sincere." Now, sincerity is the modern virtue *par excellance.* It should be noted that the rise of sincerity as a moral virtue roughly corresponds to the decline of respect for religious institutions and traditional morality. In the modern world, sincerity, not obedience to any moral code or authoritative tradition, is held to be the key to authentic moral and spiritual life.

However, sincerity offers us no moral guidance or discriminating principles whatsoever. I have not yet heard anyone suggest that the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers are insincere, but I certainly don't feel any "kinship" with those particular lovers of God, and I am sure Mr. Bryant would join me in abhorring that sort of fanaticism. But if measured by sincerity, how does Mr. Bryant discriminate between the authentic and inauthentic? The problem is inherent in the modern approach to religion that stresses technique over substance. The entire spectrum of "self-realization" teachings, whether Krishnamurti, the Bagwan, or Paramahansa Yogananda, is extremely ambiguous and gives off a faint whiff of gnosticism. What is the cause of evil in the world? We're never quite told explicitly, but it has something to do with our lack of proper meditation, our neglect of our "infinite potential," our "inward journey toward perfection," our "oneness with God." Only insincerity is original sin.

When wretched from context and transplanted in the West, Eastern religions take on a strange form. No longer bound up with the indigenous culture,



Eastern religion becomes technique and seeks to absorb elements of Western thought. In addition to homogenizing other major religions—which have contradictory and mutually exclusive doctrines—Self-Realization thought adopts Cartesian dualism in a particularly militant form: we can only directly experience Truth when we have transcended our dependence on the "fallible senses." "Truth" is realized through the "inward journey," but when truth is made so highly subjective, the "inward journey" becomes rather like peeling an onion: if you go far enough there's nothing there.

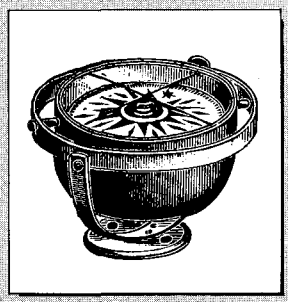
This lack of theological integrity is, I think, reflected in the appearance of the "Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine." In seeking to be an ersatz Garden of Eden, a hospitable place of meditation, the shrine lacks the grandeur and thematic unity of a cathedral, mosque, or pagoda. The first time I saw it I thought it was a converted miniature golf course. To be sure, there are Presbyterian churches that look like drive-ins, but the vacuity of Self-Realization teachings is demonstrated by its inclusion of shrines to other major religions—no Hindu shrine in India would do this—and by the gnostic vagueness of Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings. Mr. Bryant will no doubt be upset again, but then, he wouldn't want me to be insincere, would he? □

Mr. Hayward is associate editor of the Claremont Review of Books.

LIBERAL CULTURE

The Pied Five-fers of Mondale

For years leaders of various "rights" groups have promoted the enforcement of quotas based on race, gender, and other considerations as the best means of ensuring social justice. The actual results of such an approach were revealed recently by a campaign strategist for Walter Mondale, who said that in their efforts to fill the various quotas stipulated by the National Democratic Party for its convention delegates, they are "going for a lot of two-fers and three-fers," by which he meant single individuals who can be "counted" in two or three special-interest categories. Thus, the strategist, observed, "in the perverse way of these things, black males will be underrepresented, probably," because they only "count" one way, while "it will be to everyone's advantage to find black, female delegates" because, as "two-fers," they "count" twice.



Of course, white males don't "count" at all. So what do we do with Mr. Mondale himself? □

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The American Proscenium

The Center on Religion and Society

On March 5 and 6, 1984, The Rockford Institute hosted three receptions in New York City to announce a major new cultural initiative, the founding of The Center on Religion and Society. Addressing the foundation executives, media representatives, and religious leaders in attendance, Institute President John Howard explained that the new Center, based in New York, constituted "a natural expansion" of the Institute's efforts "to understand the cultural ferment and the societal fragmentation of the past 25 years," and "to identify the threads of common interest which might be woven into a new more livable and hopeful civilization." As such, the Center will seek "to restore religiously grounded values as the compass for guiding personal and public decisions in our society."

Named as director of the Center was Rev. Richard Neuhaus, prominent Lutheran pastor, theologian, and writer and former Senior Fellow at the Council on Religion and International Affairs. Rev. Paul Stallsworth, a Methodist pastor who formerly worked as research assistant at the American Enterprise Institute, serves as assistant director of the Center, and Peter Berger, professor of sociology at Boston University, serves as senior consultant. Also assisting as consultants are a panel of 11 other Center Associates, including nationally prominent scholars, theologians, commentators, and religious leaders from various denominations.

In their reception remarks, Rev. Neuhaus and Dr. Berger spoke of the current *"Kulturkampf"* embittering and dividing the American society and of their plans for making the Center a neutral forum for the rediscovery of the common ground shared by the apparently divergent segments of the Judeo-Christian spectrum. These plans include scholarly research, public events, conferences, publications, and an annual Erasmus Lecture on the role of religion in America. The Center will soon publish a monthly newsletter, "The Religion & Society Report," which will be available by subscription. □

In the Mail

***Why Are They Lying to Our Children?* by Herbert I. London; Stein & Day; New York.** Dr. London points out that school children are being taught that Uncle Sam isn't a gaunt character, but a glutton whose appetites will destroy the Earth.

***Soviet Policy Toward Western Europe: Implications for the Atlantic Alliance* edited by Herbert J. Ellison; University of Washington Press; Seattle.** Imagine having a vampire as a next-door neighbor.

***Scenes from Provincial Life* and *Scenes from Metropolitan Life* by William Cooper; E. P. Dutton; New York.** Not all serious novelists threw away character, plot, setting, values . . .

***A Guide to Chaucer's Language* by David Burnley; University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, OK.** Puts the form into its context; a faire and curteis effort.

***Problems & Prospects of Presidential Leadership in the Nineteen-Eighties, Volume III*, edited by James Sterling Young; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** On the fandango of foreign policy.

***Self Inquiry* by M. Robert Gardner; Atlantic-Little Brown; Boston.** One man's effort to truly know himself through the analysis of anecdotes.

***Vietnam as History: Ten Years after the Paris Peace Accords* edited by Peter Braestrup; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** A clear response to the thinking that leads to leftist docudramas and fictional frauds about the subject.

Semifinals

At the time of this writing, Mr. Mondale has won, roughly speaking, Iowa, Georgia, and Alabama, and Senator Hart did the same in New England and Florida. What interests us is whom it will be easier—the former or the latter—for President Reagan to beat in November. Mr. Mondale spouts checked and discredited clichés. Sen. Hart does the same with unchecked and yet uncompromised platitudes. So, it would seem, Mr. Mondale should be more of a pushover. But, we suspect, the Mondale fans will turn in force to support an eventually nominated Hart: Where would they go otherwise, this union label or another? The Hart aficionados (a lot of screams at every gathering), in case he were denied the nomination, may respond by effectively sulking and griping that their papiér-mâche idol had not been given a chance, and just not go to the voting places to manifest their malaise. So, as always with predictions, we know something—but so little, so little . . . . □

Reagan's Lot

Computers and computerized minds alike are feverishly at work in dailies and weeklies, grinding out mechanized and banal ruminations about the forthcoming election. Routinized, if not ossified, the calculation industry, which originated in the naive sham "science" of polling, offers six-figure income to half-educated entrails readers, called "expert columnists" for the readers' sake. Their methods of guessing, predicting, or forecasting the future is as old and as flawed as all of those similar practices since the invention of sorcery—all the

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modern econometric and statistical gadgetry notwithstanding. That is, it can be used as a means to sway uncomplicated human perceptions and inclinations, and as such it is already used to the hilt against Reagan by all the "objective" commentators in journals from the *New York Times* to *Rolling Stone* and from *Time* to *Mother Jones*.

We wish Mr. Reagan well—after all, he remains a frail and obfuscated political promise that things could be better if only he knew how to seek advice of people with a broader and subtler sense of both history and reality than those he has selected as his main advisers during his first term in office. Since the mid-19th century, presidents have been elected on the anticipation of change, of expectations of the electorate that the new man will improve the shortcomings, often failures, of the socioeconomic factuality. There were a few elections in which larger, more elevated, but at the same time less definable, feelings have predicated and determined the outcome. Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln come to mind—other emotions than concerns for the society's material well-being brought them to the White House; they were the nation's choices, not that of ad hoc coalesced constituencies.

True, Reagan was elected because the desire for change fused well with his coherently designed proposals for improvement, chiefly in the country's socioeconomic condition, or in the foreign policy field. But there was something more, and precisely this vague something more (no paradox, actually) gave him his resounding victory. This indistinct reality may be characterized as a popular feeling, or presumption, or hope, that Reagan's election would somehow purify the national climate, fumigate the bad cultural odors of the last 15 years, restore a sense of rewarding, meaningful existence, disperse the foul mists of fanatical irrationality presented by the liberal idea-mongers in the establishment and in the press as progress, as liberation, as the relentless righting of wrongs. Upon his election, we wrote that the heavy burden of mismanaged, wasted life oppresses everybody in this country more than Carter's mismanagement of the economy, that it's terrible to be unemployed, but unbearable to have, at the same time, a 13-year-old daughter pregnant and a teenaged son dying on an overdose of cheaply available narcotics.

Reagan became an emblem of the belief that something can be done about these miseries and horrors, a belief so gravely impaired by his three predecessors.

But during his term, he didn't address these matters, he didn't deliver on the promise, he did not come even close to materializing the unclear and so passionately craved anticipations. In foreign policy, he successfully verbalized correct perceptions and persuasions, but farmed out their implementation to people who—especially in the Middle East—made a mockery of cool, good sense by their subservience to Levantine venality that was presented as strategic acumen. His personal preferences of friends and acolytes provide little hope that what worries, attracts, or appalls the nation will ever penetrate the gilded bubble he dwells in.

Therefore, we're not optimistic this time. □

JOURNALISM

Herding Readers

The emergence of Rupert Murdoch on the scene should evoke the question: "What does it mean?" Certainly, there can be the obvious answer that explains how the newspapers that Murdoch has acquired have been transformed so that they have more in common with cheesecake and gore than with pulp and ink, but the obvious answer is only an observation about the surface. A more thorough answer can be gleaned from Richard H. Meeker's *Newspaperman: S.I. Newhouse and the Business of News* (Ticknor & Fields; New Haven, CT), which tells the story of another man whose goal was to amass as many communications outlets as possible. There are, of course, differences between Murdoch, an Australian who is still with us, and Newhouse, who was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1894 and who died in 1979. Still, what Newhouse created and its consequences are telling.

Newhouse was basically a transitional figure in the modern newspaper business: he had his rise when Hearst was peaking and descending. Newhouse, a figure of Algerian "pluck and luck," never experienced a fall—indeed, not even a decline. The Internal Revenue Service estimated that Newhouse's estate was valued at $1.23 billion at the time of his death. While the name Newhouse may not be as familiar as Hearst—or Murdoch—the family's current holdings are, in many cases, household words: newspapers including the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune and States-Item*; the omnipresent *Parade* Sunday supplement; magazines from *Bride's* to *Vogue*. And much more, including, of course, broadcast stations and cable TV services.

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Freedom of the press has always been near and dear to America; consider, for example, the simple fact that the press is dealt with in the First Amendment, not the Second or Third. It may be banal to note that with freedom comes responsibilities, but overused or not, it is still true, and yet regularly disregarded in various ways. In Newhouse's case, newspapers didn't exist for truth, justice, the American way, or for any other purpose than that of making money, period. Editorial copy was overhead; ads brought in the revenue. The ads counted, the writing didn't. Consequently, Newhouse was less a "press lord" in the sense of a Lord Beaverbrook, and more of a cattle baron of 19th-century America. Newhouse let nothing stand in his way—not feelings, traditions, livelihoods—in his avaricious quest to acquire; no one ever thought about the feelings of the steers that were being driven to the markets either. One man, Meeker asserts, a competitor, was committed to a madhouse because of Newhouse's machinations.

A newspaper wasn't a cherished organ of news and opinion for Newhouse, it was a money-making machine. Standards were set by the bottom line, not by community concerns and standards. Newhouse, in a dubious manner, purchased the Patriot Company in 1947; it published two newspapers in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In 1949, there were no Sunday newspapers printed in the town. Meeker explains that it was then a Pennsylvania Dutch community where "there were still blue laws and, it was generally believed, strong sentiment against any commerce on Sunday." He adds, "To Newhouse, Sunday had an altogether different meaning—it was the best advertising day of the week." Newhouse created a Sunday edition, aided by the local businessmen who were assured that there was money waiting to be made. The former owner-publisher of the Patriot papers stood foursquare against ads for liquor and patent nostrums; that restriction—which cost about $1 million in lost ad space—went in 1951.

Another case is that of the *Long Island Press* in Jamaica, New York. It was one of Newhouse's early acquisitions but a paper that he, it seems, came to ignore when bigger treasures beckoned. During the mid-50's, Jamaica began to deteriorate; the neighborhoods began to crumble. Says Meeker, "There were more burglaries, holdups, muggings. There was trouble in the schools. Small shops lost business." But the paper didn't comment on the threat to the status quo; indeed, Meeker claims that the paper instituted a policy whereby "No 'negative' stories [about local events] would be published in the *Press* unless they appeared first in other New York papers."

Stories about crime and the like are, after all, bad for business. The paper relented, ended its silence in the mid-60's, when the bad conditions became the norm—and folded in 1977.

The stories of employees—from press operators to editors—who lost their jobs on successful papers because newspapers were business to Newhouse are legion. Consolidation, cost-cutting, and other acts aimed at enhancing profits—which would be plowed back into doing more of the same elsewhere—while never alienating advertisers were a way of life. Quantity was the key; quality could go to blazes. The ultimate consequence is that there exists a pervasive mediocrity throughout the land, one that pops up on breakfast tables and which is picked up after dinner. This, then, is the real issue of mass newspaper ownership or, more accurately, communications empires. The dangers of a Rupert Murdoch are not found in the sensational headlines or the lascivious snapshots, but in the elimination of the freedom to report on events and to express opinions on subjects that may, in some way, be bad for the press business. In such a scheme, information, the basis of a true newspaper, is of little consequence; processing and packaging are key. Ultimately, readers become cattle. □

Harper's Redevivus

Almost a century-and-a-half in print gives a journal a specific cultural aroma: that of tradition. To be sure, there are those whose olfactory organs receive this sublimation as mustiness, or as an odor of unventilated chambers of Madame Tussaud's wax museum. To others, it signals the redolence of distinguished values of mind and heart, a bouquet of ever-beautiful norms. The title *Harper's Magazine* is still floating amidst symbolic whiffs which connote the best intellectual and literary substances. True, during the decades of its existence many transmutations and

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incarnations were visible and decipherable in its pages. In the not-too-remote past, we witnessed how, by the end of the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's, *Harper's* fell into hands of young phony men who wished, at any price, to muster and demonstrate the righteous liberal anger—and the more they tried, the more their products came across as boring, stilted, and commonplace. They tackled issues, social images, and cultural messages from a platform of tedious predictability, they praised writers who, over the subsequent years, proved to be either inconsequential, or flimsy, or irresponsible, or just liberal hacks sustained by the popular press's everlasting hunger for mediocrity. In those days, *Harper's,* its illustrious history notwithstanding, promoted perspectives on arts and letters, or on social dilemmas, which mightily contributed to the general dissolution of criteria, to the all-American feeling of decrepitude that tended to overwhelm anyone who still craved dignified cultural meanings and contents. It promulgated positions which from our present distance seem both wrong and trite. As such, it had reneged on its own cherished tradition.

The March 1984 issue of *Harper's* seems to announce *urbi et orbi* that the time of incertitude, sham, and vacillation is over. It bears the unmistakable imprint of its editor's, Lewis Lapham's, idea of a journal of enlightened opinion. Mr. Lapham, whose intellectual silhouette and personal vicissitudes as the magazine's helmsman are familiar to the American reading community, is once again in charge of *Harper's* fortunes. Thus, a spirit of innovation and freshly refined responsibility seems to suffuse Lapham's *Harper's;* it features a renewed sense of quality in both form and content. Since we believe that the ramparts of cultural and moral quality are the last lines of defense in the Great War for our civilization, we find that the old/new *Harper's* is a very welcome arrival. □

Vicious *Gauchisme*

In *The Nation* (where else?), one Daniel Singer argues that the *nouveaux philosophes*—that is, the French intellectuals, who began to bitterly criticize communism and the Soviet Union during the 1970's, were not motivated by knowledge and conscience, but were somehow commissioned by someone to perform such a heinous task:

> The powers that be realized that such a unification [had to be] prevented. They had to discredit not just the Russian experiment but the idea of revolution itself. This dirty job had to be carried out by young ex-leftists whose ideological wounds were still bleeding.

In the same journal, we read under the title "Power to Destroy" an account of its editors' wrath at the Internal Revenue Service for investigating the finances of *Mother Jones,* a strongly leftist magazine, devoted to relentless politicization of every human impulse and to eradication of "American imperialism"—be it in Vietnam or San Salvador. According to the grieving *Nation:*

> . . . the Northern California office of the Internal Revenue Service ruled that the magazine was commercial rather than educational and challenged its tax exemption. The I.R.S.'s finding must have given *Mother Jones's* business department pause. The magazine lost $500,000 last year, and it has been in the red since its founding in 1976. Losing its nonprofit status would cost the magazine an estimated $200,000 a year in additional postal fees—and would probably put it out of business.

To our mind, *Mother Jones* is not an educational magazine but a political agitprop sheet. However, what's most interesting is *where* it comes from, or *who* has been giving *Mother Jones* that $500,000 a year for the last seven years? Its circa 200,000 copies circulation obviously does not cover its publishing costs, thus—*who* is giving the subsidy? *The Nation* is less interested in that part of the story. It concludes its nasty little tale:

> This Administration's record of harassing advocacy groups, whether by withholding Federal funds or attacking their tax-exempt status, demonstrates the need for some legislative buffers.

Knowing our legislators, we may expect that "education" a la *Mother Jones* will continue. □

- **The Center on Religion and Society**
  Operating out of New York City, this new arm of The Rockford Institute will be headed by the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, distinguished theologian, editor and author.
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